

DRAMA OF THE APOCALYPSE

THOMAS C. BIRD



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(Rev.) Thomas C. Bird.

DRAMA OF THE APOCALYPSE

BY
THOMAS C. BIRD

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To

My Wife

whose sympathy and encouragement are a never-failing
source of inspiration, this volume is
lovingly inscribed

"He (Emerson) believed in quotation, and borrowed from everybody and every book. Not in any stealthy or shamefaced way, but proudly, royally, as a king borrows from one of his attendants the coin that bears his own image and superscription."

—O. W. HOLMES.

"The greatest is he who has been oftenest aided."

—RUSKIN.

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The person who attempts to interpret the Book of Revelation must expect more or less difficulty in getting a hearing. This is especially true if he be unknown to the reading public. The difficulties encountered in its mysterious symbolism have led many to look askance upon any who attempt to unravel the maze, except those who have a reputation for great learning in Biblical exposition. The last decade has witnessed many fresh attempts to explain the Book, and the present writer hopes that this is an indication of renewed interest on the part of many in this erstwhile neglected portion of the Bible.

The main reason for this modest contribution to the already large amount of literature on the subject, is the conviction in the mind of the author that all he had read on the subject was inadequate. He fervently believes that in this little volume that lays no claim to large erudition, he presents the key that unlocks much that has hitherto seemed mysterious and insoluble. This book makes no pretense to being a commentary in the accepted usage; no attempt is made to explain every word or sentence. The author's sole aim has been to give a comprehensive outline of the message of the Revelation that will reach the intellectual level of the ordinary wayfaring man. Yet he hopes that nothing really essential to a clear understanding of the Book has been left unsaid. With questions of literary criticism this book has nothing to do. The author believes that the Apostle John wrote the Revelation and the Fourth Gospel, and that the latter gives much assistance in the explanation of the former. The text of the Revised Version has been used throughout, with here and there preferred readings as occasion seemed to demand.

It is needless to say that the author has profited much by the work of others, and has not scrupled to

use their ideas wherever they harmonized with his conception of John's plan and purpose, and while he has not consciously *copied* their mode of expression, he has not sought to make mere verbal changes for the sake of avoiding a charge of plagiarism. He would particularly acknowledge his indebtedness to Prof. Wm. Milligan for the interpretation of many of the details of the Revelation in his illuminating work on that Book in the Expositor's Bible. It is only fair, however, to these writers to say that perhaps not one of them would agree either wholly or in part with the views expressed and the conclusions reached in the following work.

The author has no theory to uphold, no school of interpretation to maintain. His sole aim of attempting to ascertain the message of the Revelation has been persistently adhered to. In the scope of its theme, analysis, and general interpretation he has, so far as he knows, hewed out a new path. He cannot hope that all his statements will be accepted without question. At the same time, he trusts he has thrown some light on the problem of the Book's interpretation.

This little volume is therefore sent forth in the hope that it will prove an incentive to the study of this, hitherto regarded, mysterious and insoluble Book of Scripture; which, in spite of its exegetical difficulties, has been a solace to many in times of trouble. To this end he prays that God may bless his endeavors.

T. C. B.

PART I.

INTRODUCTORY I-V.

CHAPTER I.

THE FOREWORD.

Revelation 1: 1, 2, 3.

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to shew unto his servants, even the things which must shortly come to pass: and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John; who bare witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, even of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.”

Revelation a Neglected Book:—To the vast majority of Bible readers the Book of Revelation is an insoluble enigma. This is indeed a paradox—a revelation, yet an enigma. True, its symbolic and figurative language is unfamiliar to us. The Book teems with Oriental imagery that presents to the average Western mind very perplexing difficulties. As a result it has been left for the most part to the erudition and ingenuity of scholars. No book of the Bible is so little read, none so seldom used in pulpit ministrations. Certain sections of it, to be sure, have been used throughout the history of the Church, and are as familiar as any other portion of the Scriptures. The refuge which this Book provides

in time of trouble has always been recognized. In times of persecution and bereavement, no book of the Bible is more resorted to. This notwithstanding, to the great majority the Revelation is a sealed book.

Worthy of Our Study:—The difficulty of understanding it has been made an excuse for this almost universal neglect. But the greater the difficulty, the more earnest should we be in our efforts to ascertain its meaning. It is a part of the sacred canon, and it has been well said that the canon would be incomplete without it. It presents momentous truths. It contains the last message of the risen Christ to His Church. To wilfully neglect it, is to insult the Lord.

That there is very little unanimity among interpreters, is too well known for citation here. Readers who lay no claim to scholarship, and who come to the commentaries on the Revelation to get its meaning are often left more perplexed and bewildered. The present effort is modestly pursued in the hope that it may lead more of God's people to a study of this erstwhile neglected message.

Now, it is a mere truism to say that the Book was designed to be understood. Its author assumes that his readers are familiar with his allusions. This was undoubtedly true of the first readers of the Revelation. It should be our aim to ascertain how they understood it.

The very word by which he describes the character of his work ought to encourage every lover of Truth to strive after his meaning. "Revelation" means the unveiling of that which is hidden. This is not a sealed, but an open book. Its author is divinely instructed thus: "Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book; because the time is at hand." (xx: 10.)

Problem of the Book:—The Book gives the solution of a great problem. The fundamental error has

been to restrict its theme to the Christian era. We must widen the circle until it includes the whole history of humanity. The problem of which it treats is older than the author's day, older yet than the Christian era. It involves the long period between Paradise lost and Paradise regained. That problem is the suffering of the righteous. The age-long question is, Why do the righteous suffer, while the wicked flourish as a green bay-tree? The Revelation was written at a time when this question had become more acute than at any previous time in the world's history. Hitherto, long-suffering righteous men had looked forward to the golden age to be ushered in by Messiah's reign. They had been content to suffer and wait. They were filled with hope for the ages to come. But now Messiah had come, and the righteous seemingly never suffered so before. The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ was between the upper and the nether millstones. It was persecuted by both Gentiles and Jews (I. 9 : ii. : 9, 10.) Christians were asking the perennial question. What is the answer? The Book of Revelation. The inspired author shows the relation of his age to preceding ages. God's people are engaged in a world-wide, age-long conflict with the forces of evil. The righteous of his day are contributing their part toward the final triumph of righteousness. The Book of Revelation is, in short, the unfolding of the significant truth involved in Gen. iii: 15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel."

This is the Divine announcement of the age-long battle between Good and Evil. The persecution by Nero doubtless furnished the immediate background of the Book. Bearing this in mind, and the historical conflict between Good and Evil, with

the ever recurring question, Why do the righteous suffer?—the purpose of the Book of Revelation will be clear. It is a pictorial history of that struggle, a prophecy of the final victory of righteousness, and an exposition of the means by which the victory is secured, viz.:—through sacrifice, which is God's method of eradicating evil.

Subject of the Book:—Taking up this section in detail, we note first the subject of the Book. It is "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." The Book is also called the Apocalypse, a transcription of the Greek word here translated, Revelation. The only place in which it occurs in the Gospels is Luke ii: 32, where "to lighten" might be rendered "for revelation." Our Lord is there spoken of as a light dispelling the darkness which veiled the Gentiles. It occurs thirteen times in Paul's epistles, and three times in First Peter. The word is used in various senses:—IT IS THE UNVEILING OF SOMETHING HIDDEN. This is the sense in which it is used in the only instance in which it occurs in the Gospels, already referred to. Paul speaks of the Gospel as the "revelation of the mystery kept in silence during eternal ages, but now made manifest." (Rom. xvi: 25.) He tells the Ephesians that the participation by the Gentiles of the blessings of the new covenant was made known to him by "revelation." (Eph. iii: 3.) The gospel he preached was received "through revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. i: 12), and he went up to Jerusalem "by revelation." (Gal. ii: 2.)

IT IS AN INSIGHT INTO SPIRITUAL TRUTH. Paul prays that Christians may have the "spirit of revelation." (Eph. i: 17.) The gift of revelation was enjoyed in various Christian communities in Apostolic times (I Cor. xiv: 6, 26), and the Apostle Paul enjoyed special "revelations." (2 Cor. xii: 1, 7.)

IT IS ALSO USED IN THE SENSE of our Lord's second coming.

"That the proving of your faith, much more precious than gold that perishes, but is proved through fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (I Peter i: 7.) "Wherefore, girding up the loins of your mind, be sober and hope perfectly for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (I Peter i: 13.) There are other instances, but these will suffice.

It is important that this phrase be rightly understood, for our conception of its meaning will determine our interpretation of the whole Book. This is the rock on which the stream of scholarship breaks, and separates at least two schools of interpreters, the Preterist and the Futurist, as far apart as the beginning and the end of the Christian dispensation. According to the Futurist scheme, it only signifies the Second Advent or future manifestation of Jesus Christ. This interpretation leaves the major portion of the Book yet unfulfilled.

It is better to regard the phrase as embracing both the first and last senses. It means the unveiling of Christ, showing us the heavenly side of what in the Acts is the earthly. In the latter, the Christ is invisible, but His works are seen on earth; in the Revelation we are shown the Divine workman at His work. He is the central Figure throughout. It is of Him and His oversight of the Church that the Book speaks. It teaches us that what Jesus began to do (Acts i: 1) while on earth, He continues to do in His exaltation. The phrase "denotes the act of revealing a Divine Mystery and to signify that which is itself revealed." Christ is the Revealer and at the same time the subject of the Revelation. This view of the meaning of the above phrase, however, does not

exclude the larger and ultimate teaching, namely:—the return of Christ in power and glory, a truth directly stated as the consummation of the great struggle between Right and Wrong, of which the Book of Revelation treats. (i: 7.)

It is "the Revelation which God gave Him." This does not imply the inferiority of Christ's Person and character, as some imagine, but sets forth His distinctive office as Revealer of God's mysteries. "All things are delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does any one know the Father except the Son; and he to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." (Matt. xi: 27.) "No one has ever seen God; God only begotten, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared Him." (John i: 18.) Thus it is Christ Who addresses the seven churches (chapters ii-iii), and Who opens the sealed roll. (v: 7, 9.)

God gave Christ the Revelation that He might "show to His (i. e., Christ's) servants, the things which must shortly come to pass."

Light is about to be given here on one of life's greatest problems. We must by no means restrict the application of these words. They have a very wide outlook. Not only apostles and prophets are thought of here, but the Church of Jesus Christ in general. This, then, is as much a message for present-day Christians as for the seer himself. The question regarding in *time* in which these "things" transpire will be considered the the next chapter, in connection with the announcement of Christ's coming in i: 7.

The Author:—There has been much discussion regarding the identity of the author of this Book. Some say it was not John the apostle, but some one who forged his name. There are those who say that it was composed by another in the apostle's name,

not for the purpose of deception, but in order to record an oral revelation delivered to John. Others again claim it is the work of another John, contemporaneous with the apostle. It has been the conviction of the major portion of the Church from the beginning, that its author is John the apostle. For the first two centuries there was not a dissenting voice. Later, it is said for the purpose of getting rid of certain unpalatable doctrines, it was ascribed to Cerinthus, a reputed heretic of the first century. But, as Edward Irving said, "if the common consent of all antiquity is to overturn the heady rashness of well-meaning but inconsiderate men of evil name, then we have the most satisfactory evidence that this book was written by John the apostle, and believed by the Church to be most fully inspired. Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clemens Alexandrinus, Origen, Jerome, Augustine, and a continued stream of orthodox authority to our day, from the age next to that in which it was written, concur in the reception, the administration, and the observance of this book." (Quoted by Seiss.)

His Credentials:—Before we begin the study of the message proper, it were well to note how sound are the author's credentials. His work is "the Revelation of Jesus Christ to His servants," first to Christ's Angel, and through Him to John. The circumlocutory way in which the message reaches the Church by no means invalidates its Divine inspiration. These credentials are verified by Christ Himself at the very close of the Book. "I, Jesus, sent my angel to testify to you these things in the churches." (xxii: 16.)

Christ's "Angel":—That John does not get his message directly from Christ, but through "His Angel," is a touch which should not be overlooked, for it teaches us the present exalted state of the Savior.

He was once "the Man of Sorrows," but is now the glorified Christ, and, like Jehovah in the Old Testament, reveals Himself through His Angel. "God cannot be seen by any man," and when he reveals Himself He does so through various media; in other words, He accommodates Himself to the level of human understanding and spiritual qualifications.

We need not doubt that this "Angel," Who is the medium of communication between the exalted Christ and the seer, corresponds to the "Angel of Jehovah," and as "Jehovah" and "the Angel of Jehovah" are used interchangeably in the Old Testament, so in the Revelation, Christ and His Angel are spoken of in the same manner and with the same significance. (See x: 1.) The manner in which John received his commission clearly teaches the Deity of Jesus Christ and His equality with God. The message is received through the *Angel*, and when we come to consider the letters to the seven churches in chapters II and III, we shall learn that they are given to John by *Christ* in Person, while at the same time we are exhorted to hear what the "*Spirit* saith to the churches."

There is no mystery here for the student of John's Gospel, for there Christ speaks of Himself and the Holy Spirit interchangeably. "I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you." (John xiv: 18.) The context shows that He was speaking of the Advent of the Holy Spirit.

Some have found difficulty in the fact that this Angelic interposition is not directly stated until we reach the visions of chapter XVII. This would imply that only a fraction of the Book fulfils the promise of John's statement. But this is to be hampered by bald literalism. The continuous activity of the Angel throughout the whole of the seer's rapt experience is implied in the words "signified" and "saw." They

can only mean that the contents of the Revelation were made to pass in vision before the seer's gaze as if they were really transpiring, and the Angel forms the connection between John's senses and the things he describes. How this was done it is impossible to tell, but in view of John's statement in the beginning, and the Divine verification of that statement at the close, we need encounter no difficulty in referring all the contents of the Revelation to this Angelic intervention. To sum up, the Revelation concerns Jesus Christ as the Revealer of God's mysteries, delivered to John through Christ's Angel, and by John to the Church.

The Book's Significance:—It is necessary to say a word or two regarding the significance of this Book. "Happy he that reads, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein." Between the lines here we may discern the method of conducting religious services in apostolic times. There was no ornate ritual, or absolutely settled order. There was a pastor presiding, but the worship took on the character of what the usual modern mid-week meeting of the Church is. There was, e. g., the reading of Scripture, this mostly from the Old Testament, the New being only partly written then. Doubtless the freedom of the meeting was utilized by several of the worshipers for prayer, and songs in praise of Christ. The teaching concerning Him was of necessity largely oral, in view of the incompleteness of the New Testament. The address of the pastor would mostly comprise what he had heard about the Lord from apostle, or evangelist, or disciple.

While the New Testament was in process of being, however, it was read to the assembled congregations, now a gospel, and again an epistle. At times an epistle would be sent to several churches as a circular

letter, like the Epistle to the Ephesians. (See Conybeare & Howson's "Life and Epistles of the Apostle Paul.") At other times, epistles were exchanged between the various churches. "And when this letter has been read among you, cause that it be read also in the Church of the Laodiceans, and that ye also read the one from Laodicea." (Col. iv: 16.)

The method of worship just described may be discerned in the words under discussion. A blessing is promised all who will pay heed to the contents of this Book:—the person who reads it to the congregation, the listeners themselves, and all who keep, i. e., who profit by, the message. It would not be doing justice, however, to this sublime apostolic benediction to limit its scope to the historical occasion. Such a phrase, occurring in a book of confessedly universal application, demands that its outlook reach to all future time, and its blessing embrace all readers. Surely such a pronouncement as this ought to be an incentive to the study of the Revelation. A message which the Lord of glory thought was of sufficient moment to be made known to His Church by special embassy, a message which angels deemed it an honor to signify, cannot be of trifling significance. If we are interested in the Bethlehem manger, and in the "Man of Sorrows" and His struggles with a wicked world, we ought surely to be interested in the narrative that tells of His triumphs and of His return in glory. "All Scripture," indeed, "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. iii: 16), but some portions are especially significant and precious, and proper attention to these is rewarded by deeper religious experience. Of such is this Book. It solves for us the problem of Evil, explains many of the

Divine mysteries, teaches the triumph of Right, and pictures the joys of the redeemed.

More than eighteen hundred years have passed since it was written of these things that they were "shortly to come to pass." Earnestly pressed to the attention of the early Church, how much more urgent is it that the Church of the present day take heed to the remaining things of which the Book speaks. Standing on the threshold of the narration of these momentous truths, let us bid for the blessing held out to those who "read" and those who "hear" and "keep the things that are written therein."

CHAPTER II.

THE SALUTATION.

Revelation 1:4-8.

"John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from him which is and which was and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, who *is* the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood; and he made us *to be* a kingdom, *to be* priests unto his God and Father; to him *be* the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they which pierced him; and all the

tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. Even so, Amen.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, which is and which was and which is to come, the Almighty."

Its Significance:—This Book opens differently from the Epistles which form so great a part of the New Testament Scriptures. The first Epistle of John and the Epistle to the Hebrews excepted, all open with the usual apostolic salutation. The Foreword of the present Book, while more elaborate, is similar to that of each of the Four Gospels, which with the Book of Acts it may in a very profound sense be said to supplement. As the Revelation is a special message direct from Christ, it were fitting that its significance at once be set forth. The apostle, however, does not omit the usual courteous introduction. Of all the epistolary salutations, none is more sublime than this, and none bears a closer relationship to the contents.

"Asia":—This salutation is addressed "to the seven churches which are in Asia." The term "Asia" refers not to the continent of that name, nor yet that part of the continent known as "Asia Minor." ("Asia" was the Roman province which embraced the Western parts of the great peninsula, now called Asia Minor, including the countries Mysia, Lydia, Caria, and great part of Phrygia, with the Dorian, Ionian and Aeolian coast-cities, the Troad and the islands of the coast (Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Patmos, Coos, etc.) The name as thus used was created by the Roman administration. The Greek geographers generally employed the name "Asia" to denote the whole continent; but the Romans, during the second century, B. C., were accustomed to term the Pergamenian sovereigns (with whom they were in close political relations) "kings of

Asia," and when Attalus III bequeathed his kingdom to Rome in 133 it was formed into a province, and named "Asia." (W. M. Ramsay in Hastings' Bib. Dic.)

The phrase is instructive. Each church is addressed separately. It is a sharp descent from the simple Christian organizations of apostolic times to the grandiose hierarchies of later days. The Scriptures do not contemplate the Christians of a particular country as comprising the Church of that land, but finds one in every community of Christians. Each congregation had the authority to appoint its own pastor without regard to any other congregation. "Asia" was under one government at the time, but the Book does not speak of the Christians in that territory as "the Church of Asia." In each of the places here mentioned, was a separate congregation addressed as "a church." These independent assemblies, or any number of them, could lawfully join together in a more general organization, but not so as to lose their identity as separate, independent bodies. This is the original order of the Church, and every system which obliterates it, in so far departs from the apostolic congregational polity.

Religious Significance of Numbers:—The number of churches mentioned is also important.

Among ancient peoples a religious significance attached to numbers. It was instinctively appreciated that number and proportion were necessary attributes of the created universe. There is abundant evidence of this sentiment in the Old Testament. To the Hebrews, the number seven was sacred. Throughout the Scriptures it is the covenant number. It is the number of purification and consecration. (Lev. iv: 6, 17; viii: 11, 33; Num. xix: 12.) "The priests compass Jericho seven days, and on the seventh day seven

times, that Israel may know that the city is given into their hands by God and that its conquest is a direct and immediate result of their covenant relation to Him." The Sabbath, the Passover, the Feast of Weeks, Tabernacles, Sabbath year and the Jubilee are all ordered by seven, or seven multiplied by seven.

It also occurs as a sacred number in the New Testament. There are seven beatitudes, seven petitions in the Lord's Prayer, seven loaves to feed the multitude, seven words from the Cross, seven deacons in the Church, etc. The number seven holds a marked prominence in the Revelation. There are seven spirits before the Throne, seven stars, seven golden candlesticks, seven churches, seven lamps burning before the Throne, seven horns and seven eyes of the Lamb, seven seals, seven trumpets and seven bowls. The significance of all this will be seen when we consider the contents of chapters II and III.

Content of the Salutation:—A word or two should be said concerning the substance of this salutation. "Peace be to thee," was a common mode of address among the ancients. Writers were accustomed to wish their readers every form of prosperity. Even today, among the people of Eastern lands, this is a common form of salutation. But there is something deeper than merely temporal prosperity implied in John's phrase. What sufficeth all outward affluence if there be no peace with God? And grace! How much all need this. We are saved by grace, "for by the deeds of the law shall no man be justified." (Rom. iii: 20, etc.) "It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace." (Heb. xiii: 9.) The New Testament conceives it to be the one source of human stability. Perhaps there is no word of a religious significance oftener on the lips of Christian people, yet no word is less understood and appreciat-

ed. Its root meaning is favor, benignity, kindness; in short, the active love of God, a love that transcends all law, a love exercised not because of any merit on our part, but because of what God is, a love that it not turned away by sin, but which wells up from that changeless fountain—the heart of God.

Sources of Blessing:—The sources from which the apostle implores this are introduced in striking form. No such blessings come only from God as God. The doctrine of the Trinity is clearly enounced here. Grace and peace come in the first place "from him who is, and who was, and who is to come"; that is, from the Absolute One, Who is the "same yesterday and today and forever," Who knows no change, the infinite Father of lights with Whom is no variableness, nor the least shadow caused by turning.

They come in the next place "from the seven spirits that are before his throne"; that is, from the Holy Spirit viewed not so much in His individual Personality as in His various activities, His manifold ministrations. The Holy Spirit is One sent into the world in behalf of God's Throne, God's impartation of Himself to men. He searches all things, yea, the deep things of God, guides the Church into the Truth, witnesses to the work of grace in the hearts of men, convicts the world of sin, and righteousness and judgment.

There is a third from Whom grace and peace are implored—"from Jesus Christ." These are impossible except through Christ. No man knows the Father except he to whom the Son reveals Him. There is no way to the Father except through Christ. Neither is there salvation in any other Name. Though rejected by the builders He has become the headstone of the corner. Our be-

ing begotten again to a living hope is "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Our privileges at the Throne of Grace are due to the blood of Jesus consecrated for us that we may approach God "by a new and living way." And if we have that peace that passeth all understanding, it is because "He is our peace."

The order in which the Divine Persons are named strikes us at first as unusual, but the fact is that the Son is mentioned last because it is He as the manifestation of the Godhead who is mainly in the apostle's mind. Christ as man knows Him, sums up in Himself all God's revelations to mankind. This fact accounts for the peculiarity of the designations. The first is seen to be especially applicable to Christ, inasmuch as the New Testament elsewhere declares Him to be "the same yesterday and today and forever." Thus also the second—"the seven spirits" are the Spirit of the glorified Redeemer, Who said, "Lo, I am with you alway," the Spirit of Christ in His manifold ministrations. Hence not one but seven. So with the third—"Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead; and the ruler of the kings of the earth." In this designation, reference is made to the attributes of the Son connected with His redemptive work. It is Christ as such Who "loves us and loosed us from our sins in His own blood." This is native speech to "the disciple whom Jesus loved." So keen was the apostle's sense of unworthiness, that he seemed to himself to be the greatest sinner in the world. All others are lost sight of for the time being, and all he thinks of is that Jesus died for him, that the love of Jesus found its highest exercise in his salvation: he being the world's greatest sinner, indeed as it seemed to him the only sin-

ner in the world. But all captives of sin, loosed by Jesus through His sacrificial death, may join with the apostle in his ascription of praise.

We are led, moreover, to see that redemption is something more than liberty. The "loosed" captives are organized into a new "kingdom." They are a nation of freemen with their Redeemer as king. In this kingdom every citizen is a "priest." This title is very suggestive. Every saved person may in turn become the means of freeing other captives of sin. A priest is a mediator between God and the people. It is his privilege to draw near to God in their behalf. Perhaps there is no religious function which it is the privilege of Christians to exercise that has received less attention than direct prayer to God for the unconverted. The shortest way to a sinner's heart is that of the Throne of Grace. The Church is here thought of as a kingdom of priests. Her function is prayer.

There was no question in John's mind respecting Christ's place in the universe. No stronger testimony to His Deity could be given. The exercise of Christ's love is conceived in terms of the present, past, and future. He speaks of a love which now is, of a cleansing from sin which has taken place, and of a citizenship and priesthood the "earnest" of which is a present reality and a promise and prophecy of future fulness. Therefore, the Church, reflecting on her past, present, and future mercies, raises this song of triumphant thanksgiving.

Issue of the Conflict:—The return of Christ in power and glory is declared to be the outcome of the great struggle in which the Church is engaged. He who is now hidden from our view will yet ap-

pear in the glory due unto His Name. This will not be a glory of voluntary ascription. He will not be the recipient of universal admiration. On the contrary, He will be a very unwelcome Guest to all except His faithful followers. Those who pierced Him and all kindreds of the earth will wail at His coming. The tribes of the earth are like its kings, tribes of an ungodly world, and the "wailing" is like that of xviii: 9, where the same word is used, and where kings are described as weeping and wailing over guilty Babylon.

When Christ left the earth forty days after His resurrection "a cloud received Him" out of the sight of His disciples. (Acts i: 11.) Throughout the succeeding centuries He has been unseen but not unknown of them. His promise to be with them has been and is still being fulfilled. Even in the darkest days of the Church's history, some few of them have had conscious sense of Christ's presence. The Church has never altogether lost sight of His promise to return. Indeed, nothing is more prominent in the New Testament than this. Scores, yea hundreds, of times is it referred to. Paul alone speaks of it about fifty times. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper has as one of its purposes to keep alive this truth, showing forth the Lord's death "till He come." A truth that is treated so prominently in the Scriptures should not be neglected by those whom it most concerns. The Church should be as the waiting Bride, hourly expecting the coming of the Bridegroom.

His coming, though sudden, will not be in secret. The time is uncertain but not the fact. "Behold, He comes with the clouds." This denotes not the glory but the terror of that day. The language of

this verse describes the despair of sinners on that great occasion. “All the tribes of the earth shall wail over him.” This is descriptive of the Oriental manifestation of sorrow,—smiting the breast (Luke xviii: 13). As He ascended a cloud intervened. When He returns the clouds will unfold and reveal Him not only to His own, but “every eye shall see him, and they who pierced him.” The only other New Testament reference to the “piercing” (John xix: 34) indicates the common authorship of the Revelation and the Fourth Gospel. To His Church He comes as the Bridegroom: to His enemies, as the Judge.

Imminence of the Consummation:—We must now consider the “time” in which the “things” comprising the Revelation are said to take place. This is given in verses 1 and 3, viz.:—“things which must shortly come to pass,” and “for the time is at hand.” It is a principle of Scripture that when it speaks predictively it merges several events, now speaking of one, and again of another. This is especially true of Christ’s Second Coming which the Revelation teaches is to be the climax of the events therein recorded (i: 7; vi: 16; xix: 7; xxii: 7, 12).

The above-mentioned principle explains the seemingly contradictory statements of the New Testament respecting this event, to the intent that now it is near; while again, it is distant. The writers are not contradictory nor inconsistent; but speak as prophets, as most prophecy has a double fulfilment. Its primary features are seen in the prophet’s own day, while a larger and more significant fulfilment awaits the future.* The apocalyp-

*(E. g. Isaiah xl: 1-5. Cf. Matt. iii: 3 and parallels.) Also Ps. xvi: 8-10. Cf. Acts ii: 25-31.

tic element also enters into many of the predictive features of the Bible. Visions of events covering centuries pass in a moment before the gaze of the seer, and he records his experiences as they impress him apart from the considerations of time. To him in his vision it is as with God, namely, "a thousand years as a day." Thus the Coming of the Lord is "at hand," the whole Christian dispensation is a "short time," while in the meantime the apostles and later missionaries compass sea and land in their efforts to carry out the "great commission" (Matt. xxviii: 18-20).

It is wrong to pronounce Paul and other New Testament writers mistaken in their conception of this great Truth. They were seers who sometimes spoke in apocalyptic vein. The model for their statements concerning this event is Christ's eschatological discourse recorded in Matt. xxiv. The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple on the one hand, and His Personal Coming on the other are spoken of interchangeably; as if the destruction of the city and Temple was A coming, in judgment, and yet a type of the FINAL coming. The exact note of time was purposely omitted from the teachings pertaining to this event, the chief reason doubtless being to keep the Church pure and steadfast. The early Christians expected the Lord's return in their own day. For ages this has been the world's hope. This experience is exactly parallel with that of the patriarchs and other heroes of faith, regarding the fulfilment of the Divine promise to Abraham. "In faith these all died, not having received the promises, but having seen them from afar, and greeted them, and confessed that they were strangers and sojourners on the earth. But now they long for a better country, that is, a

heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed of them to be called their God; for He prepared for them a city." (Heb. xi *passim*.) If instead of this temporal promise there had been granted them a vision of lofty SPIRITUAL attainment, the people who again and again longed for the fleshpots of Egypt could never have been induced to leave the land of bondage. So also, if the panorama of the Church's dreary history had been unrolled before the gaze of the first converts to Christianity, the gigantic efforts, that life spent as on the brink of eternity which characterize the days of the early Church, would have been impossible.

This is not delusion. The Son of Man has been EVER coming. All through the succeeding centuries the promise of His Personal return has been seen to have deeper meaning. When, therefore, the author of the Revelation says that "the time is at hand" he refers PRIMARILY to the destruction of Jerusalem, GENERALLY to every great crisis in history, and ULTIMATELY to the final Coming and consummation of the age. The reader will infer from this last statement our view of the date of authorship. We believe the Revelation was written just before the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70. We base our opinion on the interpretation we give the Book as a whole.

CHAPTER III.

CAPTAIN OF THE LORD'S HOST.

Revelation i: 9-20.

"I, John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which *are* in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet saying, What thou seest, write in a book, and send *it* to the seven churches; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamum, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice which spake with me. And having turned I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle. And his head and his hair were white as white wool, *white* as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace; and his voice as the voice of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear

not; I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. Write therefore the things which thou sawest, and the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter; the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks are seven churches.”

Beginning of Revelation Proper.

John's Temporal Status:—“Partaker with you in the affliction, and kingdom, and patience in Jesus.” What a strange conjunction of sentences! This was a note of encouragement for the suffering Christians. John, too, was a sufferer for his testimony of Christ, but in the midst of his tribulation he did not forget that he was in the “kingdom” and could afford to patiently wait for the deliverance to be effected by his Lord; and as he was their “brother” they might be comforted with him. Tradition agrees with John's statement that he was banished by the Roman authorities to the Isle of Patmos on account of his faith.

The statement with which John begins his account of this vision is not without significance for us. It implies the chief characteristics of the Christian confession in apostolic days; namely, a common brotherhood in Christ, a common cross-bearing, yet withal a common citizenship in the heavenly kingdom, the “earnest” of which was already a common experience. This serves to show how far our Christianity answers to the

Christianity of those days, and teaches us that in so far as these characteristics belong to us, we share this same common brotherhood. This is the true apostolic succession.

His Spiritual Status:—But although John is an exile, his persecutors cannot chain his spirit. Lifted above his surroundings by an unseen power the seer describes a glorious vision and gives the secret of it.

He was "in the Spirit." This is not mere ecstasy, but the instance of a man completely dominated by the Spirit of God. He is drawn close to the eternal verities: therefore he heard, and consequently was divinely commissioned to write what he saw and send it to the seven churches. The same statement is repeated in iv: 2. John's experience is full of instruction:—first the attitude of the servant, then the vision, and finally the commission and message. It is invariably so (cf. I Cor. ii: 10-14).

The "Lord's Day":—What was "the Lord's Day?" As usual with interpreters, there is no unanimity of opinion. Some very eminent students of the Book interpreting literally, claim it was Sunday. Others would make it "the day of the Lord," i. e., the end of the age, the time of the consummation. This is the view of those who interpret on the Futurist system. Regarding the Book as altogether concerned with the Apocalypse, or Second Coming, of Christ, they explain this as the Judgment Day; that John was projected in this vision to the end of time, and that the things he saw relate to the consummation. It must be borne in mind that we are dealing with a book abounding in symbols and metaphors, that the con-

tents of the book are an unfolding, as we hope later to show, of the germinal truths contained in the first chapter. It is, therefore, more in keeping with the general tenor of the Revelation to interpret "the Lord's Day" as the whole period in which the things narrated were passing in vision before the seer's gaze.

The Trumpet-like Voice:—In this exalted spiritual condition the first thing that arrested his attention was "a great voice, as of a trumpet." It is at least coincidental, if nothing more, that when God revealed Himself on Mount Sinai the silence was broken by the "voice of a trumpet, exceeding loud." (Ex. xix: 16.) Each day as the Temple service began the great door was opened at the sound of the trumpet. The year of Jubilee was ushered in by the same token. And Paul tells us that when the Lord returns in power and glory, the silence of the tomb will be broken by "the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first, and we shall be changed." (I Cor. xv: 52) (I Thess. iv: 16). In the present instance, the sound of the trumpet was intended to fix the attention of the seer and impress him with the importance of what was to be revealed to him. Turning he saw seven golden lampstands, which are explained to him as representing the churches to which he is commissioned to write. The teaching of this symbol is plain. "The seven lampstands are the seven churches." These in turn represent the Church universal, though we must reserve our proof of this for the next chapter.

The Lampstands:—The Church is established to give light. But John does not linger to describe the lampstands, for there is something more here that attracts his attention. In the midst of the lampstands stood the Light of the World, the Lord of the Church. This scene teaches us the relation between Christ and His Church. The light she sheds she reflects from Him. A few sentences from Christ's recorded utterances will present this truth very clearly. Of Himself He said, "I am the light of the world" (John viii: 12). Of His disciples, and they were the nucleus of His Church for all time, "Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. v: 14). But this was not intended as a makeshift, a contingent provision in view of His approaching death. The Church was instituted to perpetuate His work it is true, but the Light of the World was not transferred to the Church at His death and extinguished in Him. For listen again: "As long as I am in the world I am the light of the world" (John ix: 5). But He left the world soon after those words were uttered. Did the Light then go out? Does His Church now shine by her own inherent light? No, for "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii: 20). She shines only when she is in the focus of the true Light.

The Champion of Righteousness:—But the seer hastens to describe the Person in the midst of the lampstands. This description of Christ involves a hint regarding the character of the Book of Revelation, namely, that it is a symbolical delineation of the conflict between righteousness and evil. Here is John's description of the Champion of righteousness. When he comes to mention the

Dramatis Personæ of the opposing side, we shall see his portrayal of the champion of evil.

The essentially *Divine* character of the "Captain of the Lord's host," has already been described (i: 4, 6). There John's presentation of Christ is designed to imbue with patience the suffering Church: here, it is as the Champion of His Church militant, the Church in active conflict with the evil forces of the world, that He comes forth, and the apostle therefore emphasizes the *humanness* of our Lord's Person. He is "one like unto the Son of Man." In the same way He is described in the visions of Daniel, and in Christ's own discourses concerning Himself. But to guard us against conceiving Him as a mere man, though the greatest, the Scriptures describe Him as "one LIKE unto the Son of Man." The word "like" redeems the situation and sends us on a scent of something higher than humanity, though He has everything in common with it. "Made in the likeness of men," and "in all respects made like unto his brethren." He is yet "the Word made flesh,"—"God manifested in the flesh." Comparing this description with the general character of the Fourth Gospel, we find the order reversed. There, Jesus clothed as He is with humanity, is yet the Son of God; while here, retaining His Divinity, He is yet pre-eminently the Son of Man.

His Offices:—The long garment with the girdle at the breasts indicates His Priestly activity. He is represented as engaged in the active service of the sanctuary. He is our Great High Priest that has passed into the heavens. But He is more than this. The particulars of this description indicate His Kingship also, and represent Him as in a mili-

tant attitude. Indeed, this is the chief aspect in which He appears before John in this vision. He wields a sword, a mark of sovereignty and judicial power. In its primary application we have to do here with the Lord and Judge of the Church. In His exercise of the Judicial prerogative, judgment must begin at the House of God (I Pet. iv: 17). Throughout the course of the visions His royal majesty is manifest as Judge of the world. The prophet Isaiah spoke of Him thus:—"I will clothe him with thy robe and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand" (Isa. xxii: 21).

But we cannot pass over the particulars of this description without a further word. The Son of Man "is in the midst of the lampstands." Christ dwells in His Church. His last words spoken on earth to His disciples were "Lo I am with you always." That the whole Church might know and feel the power of His presence He declared that "where two or three are gathered together in My Name there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii: 20). This is not a promise to COME to the two or three. It is the assurance that He is ALREADY THERE. The "two or three" are a part of His Church in the organic sense, just as a landlocked harbor is a part of the vast ocean. Christ is present in all His Churches. There is not a member that He does not see and know. We may say in some sense of every Christian meeting, "The Lord is there."

His Lineaments:—"His head and His hairs were white, as white wool, as snow." In Daniel's vision, the "Ancient of Days" has a garment "white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure

wool." The Scriptures tell us that "the hoary head is a crown of glory." The contrast between the humanity of Christ and this symbolic aspect of eternity should not be missed. It is a way of showing that the Eternal Word was made flesh. Christ does not appear "as the historical personage who died before He reached His fortieth year, but as a Divine Person invested with the symbolical attributes of eternity."

"And His eyes were as a flame of fire." Christ is able to look beneath the surface of things. He knows the thoughts and intents of the heart. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart." Here, then, is a burning, all-penetrating intelligence, the power to read secrets and to bring all hidden things to light. An apostate church might say, "I am rich and have need of nothing" (iii: 17) but He who has the "eyes of fire" sees that it is wretched and naked and poor and miserable and blind. "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. iv: 13).

"And his feet like burnished brass, as if it were glowing in a furnace." Every feature of this description is calculated to strike the beholder with awe. As the Champion of Righteousness He will tread down the wicked. This metal heated unto whiteness presents the thought of purity and holiness, and it is upon these feet that He walks among the churches, which to those who love Him are beautiful.

"And his voice as the voice of many waters." Here converge the many streams of God's revelation to men. "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fath-

ers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son" (Heb. i: 1). Not only so but He continues to speak as the supreme authority. He is God's final revelation. All authoritative religious utterances converged in Him and He speaks with the cumulative force of all God's revelations to men. All through the centuries He has been calling men out of the tombs of their dead selves, and Himself has said that the day is approaching "in which all that are in the graves will hear His voice and shall come forth; they that did good, to the resurrection of life, and they that practiced evil, to the resurrection of judgment" (John v: 28, 29).

Effect of Vision on John:—The impression this vision makes on John is characteristic of all such experiences. "When I saw Him I fell at his feet as dead." Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and Paul all knew the force of this. Men as brave as lions in the presence of danger, or without the least sign of perturbation when brought before kings, are left without strength by a spiritual appearance. A common reverence for the spiritual is inwrought in our natures. Christ assured John by laying His right hand on him, saying, "Fear not," and commissioning him to "Write therefore the things which thou sawest, and the things which are, and the things which are about to take place after these."

Range of John's Commission:—This is a hint of the range of John's subject. In a general way he is commanded to write of the past, present and future. It is a mistake, however, to suppose that these divisions mark chronological sequence. Some teach that "the things which are" signify the char-

acter of what John has seen. They would thus make the contents of the second and third chapters cover the whole of the Christian dispensation with the remainder of the Book awaiting its fulfilment until "after the Church has been taken out of the world" (*sic.*). "The things which must take place after these" (iv: 1) are the same as those of (i: 19) "which are about to take place" (Compare i: 1, "things which must shortly come to pass.") All these phrases have practically the same meaning, though the two former amplify the latter general statement, showing that John is to declare the bearing of the struggle between good and evil in his day on the general conflict.

Importance of Chapter I:—Thus in this first chapter of the Revelation are given the Divine and human aspects of our Lord. The Church is also presented in a double light in Christ's explanation of "the mystery of the seven stars and the golden lampstands." Her heavenly and earthly counterparts are involved in this dual description of her Lord, but so closely related is this closing verse of Chapter I to the contents of Chapters II and III that the explanation will be reserved for our next chapter as giving a better opportunity in connection with our study of the epistles to the seven churches.

The importance of the first chapter of the Revelation cannot be overestimated, for it holds the key to the interpretation of all that follows. All the truths developed in the body of the Book germinate here. The Divine status of Christ, His place in the universal conflict between good and evil, the position of the Church and the relationship existing between her and Christ are all clearly set forth in this first chapter.

Author's Method:—Furthermore, we are given an insight into John's method of treating his subject. His tendency to divide his matter into three parts cannot have escaped our notice. Examples of this tendency are:—"Who bare witness of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, whatever things he saw" (verse 2), "Grace to you, and peace, from Him who is, and who was, and who is to come,"—"and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth" (verses 4 and 5)

"Write, therefore, the things which thou sawest, and the things which are, and the things which are about to take place after these" (verse 19).

These are not trivial matters,—nothing is trivial in the Revelation—for they indicate the way to a true understanding of the Book. We shall have occasion again to call attention to this tendency.

Theology of Revelation:—Regard must be paid to the theology of the Revelation. Here in this chapter are the root ideas of the various manifestations of the Godhead recorded in the course of the narrative. We have already noticed the synonymy of the Persons mentioned in the Salutation (verses 4-8). In verse 8, it is the Lord God Who speaks. But in verse 17 the very same assumption is made by the Son of Man. Here surely is co-equality, and with what is said of the Spirit in verse 4, we have sufficient data upon which to build the doctrine of the Trinity. Throughout our study of the Revelation, we must bear in mind the germinal truths of the first chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LORD'S HOST.

Having given a description of the “Captain,” the Book proceeds to describe “the Lord’s host,” its purpose being to trace the fortunes of this host—its struggles with the world and its victory. Chapters II-III, comprising the epistles to the seven churches of Asia, teach us what the Church is in her combined spiritual and worldly features. We may believe that in each epistle reference is made to the actual conditions existing. Any other view would convey a false idea of the principles on which the Apocalypse is based, and the epistles would be unintelligible to those to whom the Revelation was primarily addressed. The lights and shadows, the virtues and the vices of those churches are all presented in this picture.

The Church Universal:—It is therefore our purpose now to show that although a specific number of churches are named, and attention is called to conditions that are obviously local, yet there are several reasons why we should regard this section as a picture of the Church universal.

Each Letter a Message to the Churches:—First, it is to be observed that each epistle, in addition to what the glorified Lord says to the particular church named, also contains a message from the SPIRIT to the “*churches*,” i. e., all the seven churches are addressed in each epistle. This fact is significant as teaching that the conditions complained of, or the virtues praised, are not restricted to that particular locality, but are applicable to the seven churches at the same time.

Basis of Selection:—Furthermore, there is every reason to believe that there were more churches in this region than the seven named in the narrative. Mention is made by one of the early fathers, of churches at Magnesia and Tralles. It is said that Colossae and Hierapolis suffered from an earthquake shortly after the days of Paul, but it is by no means certain that there were no churches in these places when the Apostle John wrote his Apocalypse. He cannot have intended all the churches of that locality, but seven are chosen from among them because their condition afforded the best typical representation of the universal Church. All seven phases of Church life as they are presented here, are seen at one time or another in the history of that institution.

The earliest commentator on the Apocalypse whose work, though only in fragments, has come down to us, Victorinus, says that what is addressed to one church is addressed to all, and that the "seven churches" mean the Church catholic. This view has been generally adopted. It certainly appears reasonable. It is otherwise inexplicable why seven and only seven and these particular seven were chosen to be the subject of the seven epistles. Seven is the number of fulness, and gives the key to the true significance of these churches, assigning to them the unmistakable character of COMPLETENESS. Let it be remembered that we are dealing with a book abounding in symbols. The numbers and figures have each a distinct meaning. The "seven churches" represent the Church of Christ from the time John wrote until the end.

Argument from Descriptions of Speaker:—It is also to be observed that the description of the Speaker is in every instance taken from the vision of Christ

in Chapter I. These descriptions are no doubt fuller and more elaborate than in the vision, but this is easily accounted for by the fact that the seven different delineations of our Lord in Chapters II and III are in Chapter I combined. So, even where the likeness is not at once apparent, this consideration points to the incontestable evidence that the germ of each description is found in the original vision of Chapter I.

Inasmuch therefore as certain parts of the epistles together represent the complete description of the Son of Man, it is a legitimate inference that the epistles themselves are portions of one whole.

First and Last Salutations.—But this argument is further strengthened by an examination of the salutations in the first and last epistles. They are so general as to preclude the notion that their significance is exhausted when applied respectively to Ephesus and Laodicea. The description of Christ in the epistle of Ephesus is, "He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, He that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." (ii: 1.) There is nothing in this that is more peculiarly applicable to Ephesus than to any other of the seven churches named. Thus also in the epistle to Laodicea, Christ describes Himself as "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the Creation of God." (iii: 14.)

A brief explanation of the various appellations contained in this last, will show the relevancy of the discussion to the subject in hand. The first of these titles is evidently derived from Isaiah lxxv : 16, where the phrase, "God of Truth" (Hebrew Amen. Rev. Ver. Margin) occurs twice. As applied to Christ, it means not that all the Divine promises shall be accomplished BY Him, but that He in Himself IS the

fulfilment of every promise God has made to His people. The second title is an echo of Christ's own words to Pilate, "To this end have I been born, and to this end have I come into the world that I should bear witness unto the truth." (John xviii: 37.) In these words Christ sums up His Mission as one of "witnessing." He is the faithful, the true Witness to eternal truth in its deepest and most comprehensive sense. The third title cannot be restricted to the material creation as though it were merely an echo of the statement that "by the Word were all things made." (John i: 3, 10.) The statement of Chapter I, verse 5, will help us here. There we have the phrase, "The faithful Witness, and the First-begotten of the dead." There can be no doubt that it is the new creation that is referred to in this third appellation, the redeemed humanity which has its true life in Christ.

We cannot escape the conviction that inasmuch as these terms have a general aspect, we have a proof that the first and last epistles are not simply members of a continuous series the first of which would be far behind the last, but rather that these bind together all seven epistles.

Recurrence of Expressions.—Again, these epistles contain many expressions whose meanings can be explained only when we find them again in later chapters of the Book, where there is no doubt that the seer is speaking of the Church Universal. The "tree of life" of the first epistle meets us again in greater detail in the description of the new Jerusalem. (xxii: 2.) The "second death" of the second epistle is explained for us in the complete overthrow of the Church's enemies. (xx: 6; xxi: 8.) The "new name" given to believers, referred to in the

Third Epistle, we can understand better when reference is once more made to it in the case of the one hundred forty-four thousand on Mount Zion. (xiv: 1.) The "authority over the nations" and the gift of the "morning star" spoken of in the Fourth Epistle are unintelligible to us until we meet the same things again in the vision of the thousand years. (xx.) The "white garments" of the Fifth Epistle we again see in the white-robed company before the Throne of God. (vii: 9-16.) In the Sixth Epistle mention is made of "the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which cometh down out of heaven from My God." (iii: 12.) We read of her descent in Chapter XXI, Verse 2. Finally, the "sitting in Christ's Throne," of the Seventh Epistle, is explained by the reign of the saints with Christ. (xx: 4, 6.)

Symbolism.—This view of the seven epistles as a "unity in diversity" is confirmed by the symbolical character of the Book of Revelation. The first chapter is unanimously acknowledged to be symbolical. It is just as unanimously admitted that from the fourth chapter onwards we also have symbolical teaching. While it is not impossible to have introduced between these two groups of symbols a section dealing with the literal, yet in view of the general character of the Book it is very improbable. No other view preserves the unity of the Book. Therefore, in concluding this discussion, we again assert that Chapters II and III represent the one Universal Church. The glorified Lord has selected certain churches with whose condition the apostle is most familiar, which afford him an illustration of the state of God's Kingdom in the world. Here he is to find the great theme of his prophecy.

The seer takes his stand on a lofty viewpoint and scans the world's history that he might ascertain the bearing of this revelation on what has gone before, in order to set forth the relation of the suffering of the righteous in his day to that of all those who in every age of the world have suffered for righteousness' sake and to show the issue of it all in the triumph of righteousness.

From this altitude he sees the Church of all ages spread out before him, and throughout his narrative keeps in view as recurring in the course of the centuries those aspects of Church life which he has described as existing in his day. Enough has now been said to show that these epistles were not sent separately, nor were they intended to be read separately, but have each a representative, and all together a complete, character.

II.

Spiritual and Worldly Elements.—The spiritual and worldly elements of the Church as portrayed in Chapters II and III now demand our attention. It will be observed that these seven epistles are divided into two parts by the position of the recurring statement, "He that hath an ear," etc. In the first three this statement precedes the promise to those who overcome, whereas in the last four the order is reversed. In a book as skilfully arranged as the Revelation, every such change is significant and must have some bearing on the teaching.

In the first place attention must be called to the fact that the best attested readings omit from the second and third epistles the words "I know thy works." The inference is that this statement in the first epistle suffices for the other two also, thus forming one group.

When we come to consider the condition of these three churches we will find that they differ very radically from the other four. In the latter a distinction is drawn between the various churches as such and the faithful remnants within their borders; whereas, in the former, all, or nearly all, are on the Lord's side.

In the first three the Church is represented as having resisted the encroachments of the world. The charge brought against the Church at Ephesus, that she has "left her first love," does not invalidate this position, for the Church as she actually exists in the world can never be wholly free from sin, and the doings of the heretical sect within the Church in Ephesus are as reprehensible to her as they are to her Lord. There is no reproach whatever against Smyrna. The environment of the Pergamum Church is confessedly precarious, and no serious charge is brought against her either. Her Lord, it is true, has "a few things" against her because she sheltered within her borders "men holding the teaching of Balaam" and "of the Nicolaitans," but the threat of destruction is made against them rather than against the Church. In none of these epistles of the first group is the Church faultless, but in none has she yielded to the influences of the world.

It is very different, however, with the second group. It is a striking fact that in the very first epistle of this group, Thyatira, we meet again with the sins spoken of in the epistles to Ephesus and Pergamum. Thyatira TOLERATED "the woman Jezebel." Ephesus "hated" the works of the Nicolaitans, Pergamum seemed helpless to prevent them, but Thyatira in her united membership seemed indifferent to those pernicious influences that were destroying her spiritual life.

Nothing better can be said of Sardis, who had a name to live but was dead. There were but a "few names who had not defiled their garments." While no charge is brought against the Church in Philadelphia, it is evident that the membership was composed largely of "the synagogue of Satan," and the faithful remnant within her is encouraged by the promise of the Lord to "keep her from the hour of trial." The words "hold fast that which thou hast" imply the desperate straits of the faithful. It is this remnant that, in the Lord's estimation, comprises the real Church in Philadelphia. Last of all, Laodicea is simply intolerable. Her judgment is immediately to take place unless she repents. Thus is it seen that while in the first group practically all are faithful, in the last we have distinct traces of a faithful remnant only.

III.

Heavenly and Earthly Counterparts:—The heavenly and earthly counterparts of the Church as corresponding to the Divine and human aspects of her Lord in Chapter I, must now be considered. This bears directly on the question of the unity of the Revelation. These dual features of the Church are revealed in i : 20 and amplified, now one and again the other, in various connections throughout the Book. (See on iv-v, vii, xiv, xix and xxi-xxii.) We desire to show that both these aspects are closely merged in Chapters II and III by calling attention to the form of the salutation addressed to the Church in Ephesus, viz.:—"These things saith He Who holds the SEVEN STARS in His right hand, He Who walks in the midst of the SEVEN GOLDEN CANDLE-STICKS." (ii: 1.) To understand the significance of this description we must compare it with the account in Chapter I. While it is briefer in form it

yet contains the gist of that vision. But the vision of Chapter I contains an emphatic touch which will, without a doubt, confirm the view now advocated, and throw light on other features of these epistles. Christ is spoken of as the “sun” (“His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength”). (i: 16.) The churches (to keep the parallelism) are represented by the “stars.” These are the heavenly aspects. He also is the Son of Man standing in the midsts of the candlesticks. The “Son of Man” and the “candlesticks” bespeak the earthly features of Christ and the Church respectively.

But should objection be raised to the interpretation just given of i: 16 as somewhat strained, the dual principle on which the whole vision is interpreted is not in the least impaired. The description of Christ in i: 4-5 is the heavenly aspect, and that of “one like unto the Son of Man,” the earthly. Thus the parallelism between “Him Who is to come” and the “stars” on the one hand, and the “Son of Man” with the “seven candlesticks” on the other, is maintained.

The “Angels” of the Churches:—Involved in this explanation is the proper interpretation of the “angels” of the seven churches. Here the Speaker’s explanation of “the mystery of the seven stars” (i: 20) will help us. These “angels” have been the subject of much discussion, and various interpretations have been given, which to our mind are inadequate and entirely out of harmony with the character and plan of the Book. Who, or what, are they?

Not Individuals:—Without taking time and space to present the many views that have been expressed, we wish to say at once that they are not

angels proper, neither "bishops" nor "ministers." No individuals of any sort are spoken of here. "The seven *stars* are the angels of the seven churches," (i: 20), and if, as we believe, the "stars" represent the heavenly aspect of the Church, then the "angels" also must stand for the same phase of Church life.

The messages are directed to the churches in their heavenly and earthly aspects, and, true to the symbolic principle, "angels" are addressed as giving the churches a personal character. This view is consistent with the terminology of the epistles. It is the whole church and not a single individual, though he be the leader, that is addressed when the Speaker says, "I know thy works," or "I know thy afflictions," etc.

Other "Angels":—This interpretation is further strengthened by various references throughout the Book. Not only the seven churches, but the "abyss" and the "waters" have their "angels," also. (ix: 11; xvi: 5.) God proclaims and executes His will by "angels." He addresses even the Son by an angel. (xiv: 15.) The very opening of the Book represents Jesus Christ as revealing His message to John through His angel. In view of these examples it is impossible to escape the conviction that the "angel" and the thing which it predicates are identical, with this distinguishing feature, that "the 'angel' is interposed when the persons or things spoken of are represented as coming out of themselves and as taking their part in intercourse or action."

If the above explanation of the dual aspect is correct (and it surely harmonizes with the plan of the First Chapter of the Revelation), then all three figures, stars, angels, and candlesticks, are used

synonymously. It may help the reader if this were put in the inverse order. The seven candlesticks (earthly aspect of the churches) are the seven stars (heavenly aspect), and Christ's explanation of the "stars" is that they are the "angels" of the churches; or, to put this inversely also, the "angels" are the "stars."

Therefore, the messages are addressed not to any single individual in heaven or earth, but to the churches, which in their aggregate represent the Church of all time. They can be spoken of as messages to the "ANGELS of the churches" in accordance with the dual features in which the Church is so often contemplated in this Book. Thus the "angel" predicates the heavenly aspect, while the name of the church to which the special message is addressed, predicates the earthly. The objection that we have "a manifest confusion of symbols" does not hold if we bear in mind the two points of view from which the Church is regarded in these chapters.

CHAPTER V.

THE LORD'S MESSAGES.

Correspondence between Description and Action:
—It must now be observed that the descriptions of the Speaker correspond with the special messages of the epistles. Thus, in the epistle to Ephesus, Christ represents Himself as "He who holds the seven stars

in his right hand, He who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks," and warns her that unless she repents He will remove the candlestick out of its place. It implies the ease with which He could remove any or all of the candlesticks as He walks among them.

In the epistle to Smyrna He is "the first and the last who became dead and lived again." Thus He exhorts this Church to be "faithful unto death," and the overcomer shall not be hurt by the "second death."

To the Church in Pergamum He reveals the two-edged sword and threatens to use it unless she repents.

To the Church in Thyatira He describes Himself as "the Son of God, Who has His eyes as a flame of fire." His special message is that He "SEARCHES" with these "eyes," "reins and hearts" and rewards according to works.

In the epistle to Sardis He has "the seven spirits of God and the seven stars." The Church is exhorted to watch or He will "come as a thief" and she shall not know the hour of His coming. The correspondence may not appear to be as clear in this epistle as in others, but a correspondence there surely is. "Spirit" is something mysterious, intangible. Like the wind, we know not whence it comes nor whither it goes. Stars, too, suddenly appear, and as suddenly, so to speak, withdraw their shining. Thus the Speaker illustrates the imminence of His coming, its mysteriousness and suddenness.

He describes Himself to the church in Philadelphia as "the Holy, the True, He Who has the key of David, Who opens and no man shall shut, and shuts and no one opens." The message to this church plainly corresponds with this description,

"I have set before thee a door opened which no one can shut."

Finally, the Church of Laodicea is to know Him as the "Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." The meaning of this expression was given when we considered the relation of the "seven churches" to the Church Universal. It represents Him as the Head of the new humanity that has its true life in Him. The Laodicean Church said of herself, "I am rich and have need of nothing": Christ said that she "was wretched and poor," etc., and counsels her to buy of Him "gold refined by fire." This she must do if she is to be a part of the new Creation.

Promise to the Overcomer:—In every epistle also there is a promise to those who "overcome." These promises cover a wide field. Thus that to Ephesus, "I will give to eat of the tree of life," suggests Eden. The promise to Smyrna " * * * shall not be hurt by the second death," that of deliverance from the power of sin. A word of explanation may be necessary here. We will meet the expression "second death" again when its meaning will be more fully disclosed. It may, therefore, suffice at present to say that the "second death" has reference to moral disintegration. The Scriptures speak of the unregenerate as "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. ii: 15): the "second death" is this state intensified, the state in which sin has complete mastery over its victim. The promise to the overcomer in this epistle is that he shall be delivered from this fate.

The promise to those in Pergamum who overcome has reference to the wilderness experience of

the ancient Israelites, "I will give of the hidden manna."

The reward to be given those in Thyatira who triumph is rulership over the nations—the kingdom. Perhaps there is here an echo of our Lord's words to His disciples: "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (Luke xii: 32.)

The overcomer in Sardis will be "clothed in white garments." White is an emblem of purity, and we may regard this as a figure of Christian consecration.

The epistle to Philadelphia promises the overcomer citizenship in the heavenly commonwealth. He will be an inhabitant of the new Jerusalem.

Lastly, to those in Laodicea who overcome is promised likeness to Christ. This is the ultimate blessing. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like him." (I John iii: 2.) Associating with Him, supping with Him, "seeing Him as He is," they will become like him in character and station. "I will give to him to sit down with Me in My Throne."

Here then is compassed the whole life of humanity from the garden of Eden to Paradise restored. This broad sweep of vision deepens our conviction that we have not misstated the purpose of this Book, viz:—to show the progress and the outcome of the universal conflict between Good and Evil.

The Author's Artistic Skill:—Our study thus far ought to convince us that the Revelation was written with a conscious, artistic purpose. Here is displayed the author's high order of poetic instinct and skill, together with the orderly arrangement of

his material, which will become more manifest as the plan of the Book opens to the mind.

Purpose of the Epistles:—But why these addresses to the churches? The answer is plain. There must be no coldness, no fickleness, no indifference, no compromise, no dead formalism, nor religious tepidity in the Church. She is the Bride of Christ. Judgment must begin at the house of God. In this contest between Righteousness and Unrighteousness, the forces that stand for righteousness must themselves be pure.

Having seen what these epistles are in their entirety, let us briefly glance at each in its order. Our object is not to give a detailed exegesis, but merely gather up the general ideas each letter contains, showing their relation to the Book's universal theme.

ONE. EPHESUS LETTER.

Revelation ii: 1-7.

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, he that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks: I know thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them which call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false; and thou hast patience and didst bear for my name's sake, and hast not grown weary. But I have *this* against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the

first works; or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

Ephesus was the metropolis of Ionia, a cosmopolitan city having the advantages and disadvantages common to such a community. The wealthy and the learned were there, as well as the poor and illiterate. The history of the planting of the Church in Ephesus is recorded in Acts xviii: 19; xix. The Apostle Paul, on his arrival in the city, went, according to his custom, to the synagogue, and after setting forth the claims of the gospel departed, promising to return later, leaving behind him Aquila and Priscilla, by whom he had been accompanied to Ephesus. From such an apparently hurried beginning grew this strong church to which the Lord said, "I know thy works, and thy toil and thy patience."

There is progress of thought here. There may be many who "work" in the Church, fewer who labor or travail for souls, fewer still who are patiently continuous in this. But all these features were found in this church. Moreover, it had successfully resisted evil, had zealously guarded the truth, had tested the claims of those who would teach within her precincts, finding them false, and had persistently upheld the honor and glory of Christ's Name. This Church had a splendid record, and sad is it that it should have been marred by anything whatsoever.

Fickleness.—It is evident that the Ephesian Church had deteriorated much since Paul bade farewell to its Elders at Miletus. The citation of its commendable qualities is followed by this complaint, "But I have against thee that thou didst leave thy first love." Only one blemish marred it, but, like the "rift within the lute," it spoiled the harmony of its life. It was scrupulous about duty and doctrine, but lacked the one thing that could give these stability and power. It had become fickle, and the youthful exuberance that once characterized it had turned to coldness. This Church was like the housewife who keeps the home spick and span, who is a DUTIFUL wife, but who has no affectionate greeting for her husband when he returns home from the day's toil. She does everything from a sense of DUTY.

There are many in the Church today who are loyal in that sense only. This Ephesian Church was active, though she had left her first love. "First love is the love of espousal. First love is martial. In writing to the Corinthian Church Paul said, "For I espoused you to one husband, that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ." That is first love." Its elements are simplicity and purity. Here is described the love of espousal, "first love," and the fear expressed that this pure love may be lost. The pathos of the situation is seen in the fact that the Church was still active, apparently ignorant of, or oblivious to, its declension. It is possible to have the semblance of Christianity without the real experience, to have

"a form of godliness while denying the power thereof." (II Tim. iii: 5.)

The condition of this Church has been repeated in the history of the Church at large. It is seen in the modern tendency to discard the old because it is old, for the new. We are living in a profane era. Few things that bear the mark of time are being respected. There is scarcely a doctrine hoary with age that has escaped vandal hands. This is not criticism of the new learning. We cheerfully acknowledge our indebtedness to the Historical and Critical methods of investigating truth. We welcome knowledge from every quarter. We court investigation of what we believe. We hail with delight the new day that has dawned on the intellectual world, and are sure that men can do nothing against Truth, but much for it. The Bible has a far greater value for us under the present method of study. Our protest is not against sincere, scholarly, truth-loving investigation, but against the indiscriminate iconoclasm that would ignorantly destroy foundations upon which many superstructures have in turn been erected, and which are still capable of maintaining their place.

Is truth to be discarded because it is old? We must not reject it simply because it may be new and untried, but let us also for the contrary reason hold firmly to the doctrines that have stood the test of time, doctrines that inhere in the very life of the Church, the loss of which would make us infinitely poorer. The age of a doctrine is an argument for its retention. A diamond and charcoal are both carbon. The vast difference in their

value lies in their age. The charcoal is but of yesterday, while ages of pressure produce the diamond.

Instability:—The charge of instability might, with justice, be brought against many a church, and we will miss the purpose of this Divine message, which has for its object, the keeping of God's people to a lofty standard of religious life, if we insist on giving it a restricted, a local application. We are continually praying that God visit His Church, that He come in power, etc. Have not we, in the light of this complaint in the Ephesian letter, missed the truth of the matter? "THOU DIDST LEAVE thy first love." God has never left His Church for a moment; alas, it is the Church that has so often lapsed from Him.

TWO. SMYRNA LETTER.

Revelation ii: 8-11.

And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write:

These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and lived *again*; I know thy tribulation, and thy poverty (but thou art rich), and the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

An Exhortation to Faithfulness:—There is no complaint in this epistle and consequently no rebuke. Remembering now that the local conditions were prophetic of certain phases of Church life, it is consoling to think that there have been times in the history of the Church when she has been pleasing to her Lord.

One cannot read this history without being impressed with the fact that in every age a few have been found faithful and who kept the light burning, although they were compelled to worship in the dens and caves of the earth. The memories of the Waldensees, Albigenses and other Christian sects spring into the mind.

Smyrna was a prosperous city with a large Jewish population. The Jews were bitter against the Christians, and incensed the Gentiles against them. We learn nothing of this persecution from the Scriptures other than the reference in this epistle. But to treat it superficially is to neglect one of the best helps toward a true interpretation of other portions of the Revelation. Indeed this little item if properly taken into consideration would materially change the opinions of many students of the Book. For it compels us to include in the historical situation Jewish as well as Roman persecution. The force of this may not be felt at present, but it will throw considerable light on the interpretation of Chapters XIII and XVII. Profane history records another persecution in the second century, to be accurate, 155 A.D., and tells how Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, who sat at the feet of the author of the Revelation, suffered martyrdom at the age of ninety.

He who "is the first and the last, Who became dead and lived again," has a message of comfort for His suffering disciples. He knows their tribulation, their

poverty, and the villification they are enduring. But notwithstanding their outward poverty, they are inwardly rich,—rich in all the graces of Christian character. Had not He suffered in the same way? Yes, His own countrymen incensed the Gentiles as in their own case, and together they put Him to death. But He "lived again." He, therefore, not only sees their affliction and sympathizes with them, He identifies Himself with them. The relation between Him and them is so vital as to make their respective conditions reciprocal (Acts ix : 4). They are partners with Him in His sufferings; they fill up on their part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ (Col. i : 24). But this account is squared by the life they derive from Him.

This word of consolation was intended to prepare them for worse things. "Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer." He does not promise an immediate cessation of their ills. Rather He fortifies them for more. There is no profounder proof of grace than the ability to suffer wrongfully and yet manifest a gracious spirit. The finer graces of Christian character are revealed under bruising and pressure, as it is the crushed rose that gives the greater fragrance. But notwithstanding this further persecution He exhorts them to be faithful even to the degree of martyrdom. How rich indeed must such a Church have been to have included in its ranks the sainted Polycarp who died a martyr's death in preference to denying his Lord. This faithfulness even unto death was deliverance from a doom terrible to contemplate—the second death, an intensified phase of spiritual torpor described in later chapters as the "lake of fire," the eternal doom of the enemies of righteousness.

THREE. PERGAMUM LETTER.

Revelation ii: 12-17.

And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write:

These things saith he that hath the sharp two-edged sword: I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is: and thou holdest fast my name, and didst not deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also some that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans in like manner. Repent therefore; or else I come to thee quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it.

"Broad Churchism":—Pergamum was a city devoted to Esculapius, the god of medicine, that branch dealing with the secret springs of life. The church here occupied a difficult position. Indeed its very existence seemed like sufferance on the part of Satan, who was enthroned in this city.

But the Name of Christ was steadfastly held by His followers. Here, too, persecution had been rife

and at least one man had suffered death for his faith. The Lord commends them but at the same time calls attention to the abuses going on in their midst. There were men in the Church who taught the doctrines of Balaam and of the Nicolaitans. The history of Balaam is given in Numbers XXII-XXIV. In the words of this epistle "he taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things offered to idols and to commit fornication." The substance of this teaching was that the Covenant protected them from the consequences of their evil actions. Both in the camp of Israel and the Church of Pergamum the utmost confusion resulted. However the teaching of the Balaamites may have differed from that of the Nicolaitans, the result was the same. The latter are supposed to have assumed the name of Nicolas, one of the original deacons in the Church of Jerusalem, but their teachings were doubtless a perversion of what he believed.

This warning needs to be sounded today. With many, church-membership is everything. This gives them free license, the covenant protects them and saves them from evil consequences forsooth. There is need that clarion voices sound the fundamental condition of right relationship to God—"Ye must be born again." We must stand for a regenerate Church.

The Church in Pergamum lacked discipline and was cursed with a false charity. It was infected with "broad-churchism." There were so many well-meaning people outside the Church (sic) that it would stifle its scruples, it would make concessions to meet the wishes of such.

Weak churches, especially, are very apt to welcome those who may have money and influence without character. But it is a compromise with evil. Better

a dozen good spiritual members than a hundred who may have zeal without godliness.

Therefore, He that hath the two-edged sword unsheathed calls on this Church to "repent." This repentance must take the shape of house-cleaning. "Satan's throne" must be demolished: those zealous teachers, who prove to be stumbling-blocks, must be ousted. Unless this is done He will come and make war with them. It would not have been the first time that Christ had come in judgment on His Church. Paul speaks of handing over certain persons to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, and also of those who were "asleep," i. e., who were in their graves, because of the abuse of the Lord's Supper—others being "weak and sickly." (I Cor. v: 5; I Tim. i: 20; I Cor. xi: 30.)

The promise to those who carry out the Will of the Lord is two-fold: They will be fed with the "hidden manna." Reference is made to the special provision made for the Israelites in the wilderness. This "bread which came down from heaven" is however "hidden," i. e., spiritual.

They are to have the "white stone" of acquittal. When an accused man went forth justly acquitted, a white stone was given him as a token of his innocence. It was also given for other reasons. Victors on fields of battle received a white stone as a reward of triumph; it was also a token of free citizenship. On this stone a new name is written which no one but the recipient can know. This is equivalent to Paul's statement, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost." (I Cor. xii: 3.)

FOUR. THYATIRA LETTER.

Revelation ii: 18-29.

And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write:

These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet are like unto burnished brass: I know thy works, and thy love and faith and ministry and patience, and that thy last works are more than the first. But I have this against thee, that thou sufferest the woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess; and she teacheth and seduceth my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time that she should repent; and she willeth not to repent of her fornication. Behold, I do cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of her works. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto each one of you according to your works. But to you I say, to the rest that are in Thyatira, as many as have not this teaching, which know not the deep things of Satan, as they say; I cast upon you none other burden. Howbeit that which ye have, hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers; as I also have received of my Father; and I will give him the morning star. He that

hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

The Church's Worldly Side:—In this letter to Thyatira we begin the study of the Church from a new viewpoint. Thus far we have considered her from the Divine side. It is the Church in her relation to her Lord, and not in her conflict with the world that has hitherto engaged our attention. To be sure, we find sin within her precincts, but the bulk of the membership is true.

It is the latter phase that now demands our attention, and we shall see that in the conflict between Righteousness and Evil, the Church as represented in these four remaining epistles has surrendered to the world. Seen here locally it is repeated on a scale as wide as the Roman Empire in the days of Constantine, when Church and State were first united. This marks the beginning of a wholesale spiritual declension. Up to this time, armies and navies were on the side of the pagans; nevertheless the victories of the Church had constantly increased.

The Church of Thyatira was probably founded through the instrumentality of Lydia of Thyatira, who was converted under the preaching of Paul on the banks of the river in Philippi. (Acts xvi: 13-15.)

A Call to Separation:—There is a Divine regard for the good qualities of this Church. The works, the love, the faith, the ministry, and the patience are all noted. No virtue is overlooked. But there is something radically wrong here. "Thou sufferest (i. e., toleratest) the woman Jezebel who calls herself a prophetess; and she teaches and seduces my servants to commit fornication and to eat things offered to idols."

Does any one demur concerning this seeming spirit of intolerance? This is not a question of orthodoxy.

It is a matter of cause and effect. The teaching that encourages immoral living must be dealt with in a summary way. Jesus was not a bigot, and Christianity is larger than the local Church. To show that there is nothing here of an intolerant character, it might be well to place alongside of these words of condemnation, certain words that are unmistakably expressive of intolerance and narrow-mindedness.

"Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy Name, and we forbade him because he followeth not with us." (Luke ix: 49, 50.) These words, too, by the man who was commissioned to write the above epistle. But what is the Master's reply? "Forbid him not, for he that is not against us is for us." This is a sufficient answer to any demurrer. There must be something in this Church that cannot be tolerated. And if Christ cannot, then they **MUST** not. What is the trouble? There is a "woman" here who claims a new inspiration. "She" professes to have a power that fathoms the mysteries of God, which excelled any power possessed by the Apostles. Christ calls "her" pretended powers "the depths of Satan," and the result of "her" teachings is such that "she" is likened to Jezebel, the shrewdest and most unscrupulous woman of Old Testament times.

The state of affairs in Thyatira is infinitely worse than in Pergamum. There, the teaching was to all intents and purposes that the Covenant relation precluded judgment for sin, that Christians could commingle with the world with impunity; but here the **SINFULNESS** of sin is denied. There is no such thing as sin in "her" estimation, and therefore has no place in "her" system. Such teaching issued in every form of corruption.

Time was given her to repent, but she was not willing to repent. She set herself in rebellion against

Divine authority, and there is nothing to be done but to bring judgment. Because the Church tolerates her, she will become a still greater menace. The penalty the Church must undergo for this indifference to the danger that imperils its life is a still greater thralldom.

Who, or what, is "the woman Jezebel"? The R. V. Marginal reading renders, "thy wife Jezebel," i. e., wife of the "Angel" of the Church in Thyatira. This makes impossible two interpretations usually offered when these letters are under consideration. The "angel" cannot be the pastor of the Church and the husband of "Jezebel." Such a state of things is well-nigh inconceivable. A like impossible situation is created by regarding "Jezebel" as an individual. It is much more in keeping with the character of the Apocalypse to regard this as a collective symbolical name.

"Jezebel":—There is an apostate element in this Church for which the name of king Ahab's wife is not inappropriate. This element is a "harlot" as contrasted with the other members of the Thyatira Church, namely, the Bride of Christ. And to this faithful remnant, there is a call to separate themselves from this "woman" and all who are in league with her. No further "burden" is to be placed on them. They are not to be deceived by the pretence of a further revelation. That already given is sufficient for the time being, and when they are capable of receiving more it will come through a channel, the purity of which none can question. "I have yet many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth * * * and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come." (John xvi: 12, 13.) The Church of the present day needs the same lesson. She must distinguish the true from the false in re-

gard to the new voices all around her. No other revelation will be made: Christ will put no other "burden" on her. The distinct message of this letter is a call to separation, and the need of the present day is a deeper consecration on the part of God's people. What a contrast between the rewards of the two classes! "Them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of *her* works." But "he that keeps *My* works will have authority over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers." The "works" of the "woman" and the "works" of Christ are placed in contradistinction. The reward of him that keeps the works of Christ, is to share His rule. (cf. *Psa. ii: 9.*)

FIVE. SARDIS LETTER.

Revelation *iii: 1-6.*

And to the angel of the church in Sardis write:

These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars: I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead. Be thou watchful, and stablish the things that remain, which were ready to die: for I have found no works of thine fulfilled before my God. Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and didst hear; and keep it, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. But thou hast a few names in Sardis which did not defile their garments: and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy. He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in

no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

A Protest Against Dead Formalism:—This is the only epistle thus far without a commendation, and therefore is in this respect, at least, the saddest of all we have so far considered. In all these other Churches there are some things to commend. With what changed emphasis we read "I know thy works." So it was not devoid of works. Indeed, it had established a name for itself along this line. In its appointments and the elaborateness of its ritual it may have satisfied the most fastidious. But there was nothing here to satisfy the heart of Christ. The Church was dead. There are some things which give a Church a name that are no indications of life.

"Become watchful and stablish (or strengthen) the remaining things." Words of counsel. Christ has no quarrel with those who **MUST** have elaborate forms of worship. Indeed, to those who have not grown sufficiently to partake of the strong meat of the word, they may be necessary. When they **ARE** necessary, it is a sign of spiritual childhood. But Christ does not ask us to discard them. If we must have them we should "stablish," i. e., strengthen, fulfil them.

Wonderful blessings of grace had been showered on this Church, but what poor returns it had made. Here is Christ's protest against dead formalism. Unless the Church repents, the suddenness of her Lord's coming will cut short her career. But in the midst of all this spiritual torpor, there were a few who were not defiled, who were found worthy of the Lord's companionship. They "shall be clothed in white gar-

ments,” their names will not be blotted out of the Book of Life, but will be confessed before the Father by Christ.

SIX. PHILADELPHIA LETTER.

Revelation iii: 7-13.

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write :

These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and none shall shut, and that shutteth, and none openeth: I know thy works (behold, I have set before thee a door opened, which none can shut), that thou hast a little power, and didst keep my word, and didst not deny my name. Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of them which say they are Jews, and they are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, that *hour* which is to come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown. He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and mine own new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

The Expansiveness of Christianity:—As in the case of the Smyrna Church, the Lord has no complaint

against Philadelphia. Recognition is made of the "works," but these are not expatiated upon as in some of the epistles. It would seem as if He were impatient to at once deliver His message. The nature of the message indeed accounts for this seeming abruptness. Its keynote is opportunity. Opportunities do not wait. A new note is struck here. Christianity is not to be restricted to any locality: it is inherently expansive. The missionary spirit characterized this Church. It was not strong as men count strength. Indeed, it had but a "little strength," but it had kept His word, and had not denied His Name. This was the secret of its success: it is the secret of success in any Church. Because of its fidelity in the little things, large opportunities are given it. "Because thou wast faithful in a little I will make thee ruler over many things." (Matt. xxv: 21.)

Thus there came to a Church neither great nor strong an opportunity it was not slow to use. The problems before this Church were very similar to those troubling the Church in Smyrna. "The synagogue of Satan" is the name Christ gives to the Jewish persecutors of these Churches. The message to Smyrna, you will recall, was an appeal to faithfulness even unto death. In that case, persecution could not be avoided. There was no promise of immunity. But here it is very different. The enemies shall bow down: they shall know that Christ loves His Church, and that in persecuting it they are persecuting Him.

This was a word of encouragement in view of the approaching climax, a universal trial. "Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial which is about to come on the whole habitable earth, to try those who dwell on the earth." This is another evidence that these epistles were not restricted in their application to the particular

Churches named. The message to this Church and the promise, "I come quickly," might be regarded as germinal of the contents of the Revelation.

The promise to the overcomer is also significant. He who is faithful in the face of a persecution that is world-wide, will be made a "pillar" of the temple. There will be nothing weak about such Christians: fighting the foe and stemming the flood will make them strong. Instead of making the Church a nursery, instead of being supported BY the Church, they rather will become the Church's best supporters.

SEVEN. LAODICEA LETTER.

Revelation iii : 14-22.

And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write:

These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God: I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire; that thou mayest become rich; and white garments, that thou mayest clothe thyself, and that the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest; and eyesalve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I reprove and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the

door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

Religious Tepidity:—This is the very saddest of all the epistles. In every other Church, Sardis excepted, there has been something to commend. If they lacked godliness they had at least some zeal. But here as in Sardis there is absolutely nothing to commend. It was neither coldly indifferent nor fervently zealous. It was tepid. The temperature was unbearable. Cold water is refreshing, thirst-assuaging; hot water gives relief when the stomach is distressed; but tepid water is sickening, and for that reason Christ says to this Church, "I am about to spew thee out of my mouth." The same thought as that expressed in Psalm XCV, "Forty years was I grieved," literally, sick at the stomach.

This was the SPIRITUAL condition of the Laodicean Church. As to her TEMPORAL condition she was "rich, having need of nothing." She was perfectly satisfied with this estimate of herself. But Christ's estimate of her is that she was "wretched and miserable and poor and naked and blind," counsels her to buy refined gold of Him that she may have real riches; demands true zeal.

Notwithstanding the condition of this Church, there is no threat of judgment, no warning that the candlestick is about to be removed from its place, but Christ Himself becomes a suppliant, and if anyone will open the door He will come in and sup, and commune with that person. What condescension! Because of this communion there is the promise of Christlikeness to

the overcomer, "I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne."

We have now considered these epistles from every view-point, some features briefly, of necessity, but we trust we have proved our contention that in them, besides the local condition of the respective Churches, we have a kaleidoscopic view of the Church universal, both in her divine and worldly features.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FORCES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Revelation iv-v.

After these things I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard, a voice as of a trumpet speaking with me, one saying, Come up hither, and I will shew thee the things which must come to pass hereafter. Straightway I was in the Spirit: and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and one sitting upon the throne; and he that sat was to look upon like a jasper stone and a sardius: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, like an emerald to look upon. And round about the throne were four and twenty thrones: and upon the thrones I saw four and twenty elders sitting, arrayed in white garments; and on their heads crowns of gold. And out of the throne proceed lightnings and voices and thunders. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the

throne, which are the seven Spirits of God; and before the throne, as it were a glassy sea like unto crystal; and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, four living creatures full of eyes before and behind. And the first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face as of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, having each one of them six wings, are full of eyes round about and within: and they have no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, which was and which is and which is to come. And when the living creatures shall give glory and honour and thanks to him that sitteth on the throne, to him that liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders shall fall down before him that sitteth on the throne, and shall worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and shall cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honour and the power: for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created.

And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back, close sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a great voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no one in the heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book, or to look thereon. And I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open the book, or to look thereon: and one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath

overcome, to open the book and the seven seals thereof. And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he came, and he taketh it out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne. And when he had taken the book the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sing a new song, saying, Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth. And I saw, and I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a great voice, Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every created thing which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things that are in them, heard I saying, Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever. And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the elders fell down and worshipped.

The Seer's New Vantage-point:—As we proceed in our studies it will be necessary to bear in mind what has already been emphasized, viz.: that the truths developed in the body of the Book are germinally presented in the first chapter. In order, therefore, that we may understand the position occupied by Chapters IV and V it were well to briefly recapitulate. The Divine character of Christ is portrayed in i: 4, 5, and Christ clothed with humanity in i: 13-20. Involved in this dual description of the Lord, is that of the Church in her heavenly and earthly relations. The Church as she actually appears in the world, with her spiritual and worldly features, is described in Chapters II and III. Chapters IV and V bring before us the *DRAMATIS PERSONAE* and the resources of righteousness, together with an idealized conception of the great theme he is to discuss; with a wider horizon from which to view the scene of the conflict. This thought is sustained by a glance at the opening words of Chapter IV. A door is opened in "heaven," and the Seer is invited by the "first voice" (i. e., the "angel," identical with the Speaker of the messages to the Churches, viz.: Christ) to "come up hither." The scene of the visions is shifted, as it were, from earth to heaven. The real battle in behalf of righteousness is directed thence. The scene of the warfare is earth. The din and noise of battle is conspicuous here, but well is it for the Church that her Lord is "high and lifted up" above the confusion (Isa. vi: 1), whence He may direct the affairs of His world. It is to this vantage-point that the Seer is now directed to come. He must behold "the things which must shortly come to pass" (i: 1) from a loftier point of view. It is easy to go astray here. This is sequence of vision merely, not of chronology. There is nothing more stated here than we

find in the opening words of the Book. Many editors connect the words "after these" with verse 2, making it read, "After these straightway I was in the Spirit." Irrespective of this, however, there is absolutely no advance in thought here. The statement is only a reiteration of the terms of John's commission. "The things which must shortly come to pass" (i: 1), "the things which thou sawest, and the things which are, and the things which are about to take place after these" (i: 19), and "the things which must take place after these" (iv: 1), all have the same meaning, and the last two are explained by the first.

This loftier view-point gives the Seer his proper horizon.

A Crucial Point:—We have lingered here because this is a crucial point with expositors. Many interpret this rapture as being typical of the experience of the Church at the end of the age, and thus project their reasoning to that time. They regard everything in the Book following this as taking place "AFTER the Church has been taken out of the world." This takes away every basis of reasoning and lands us in the realm of speculation, leaving us no tangible rallying point.

There are three facts to be borne in mind here. While the epistles to the seven Churches have in view the Christian Church of all the centuries, they are primarily applicable to the local conditions that obtained in the Seer's day, and in any attempt to understand the Revelation this must be the basal conception.

Again, we must rid ourselves of a literal conception of the Seer's experience in this connection. The Book of Revelation is full of symbolism, and we must be careful to give proper meaning to its terminology. In plain language, the section under discussion means

that John has taken an advanced step toward carrying out his commission. The things he now sees are precisely what he has seen before, then in their actual condition, now in their ideal. He has not really been translated to heaven. He is on the isle of Patmos still. It is a vision. Should any wonder be expressed at the repetition of the statement concerning the subject-matter of the Book, suffice it to say in the first place that it is in keeping with the Author's tendency to divide his matter into three parts, which has already been noticed. Then this statement is more specific and also more convincing than its predecessors. For example, the statement in i:1 is general: "Which God gave Him (i. e., Christ) to *show* to His servants." In i: 9 John is commanded to "*write* therefore the things which thou sawest." There he receives his commission, and in Chapters II and III merely writes what Christ dictates. But in the statement under discussion the Apostle is in a position to *see* the things that are about to take place. "Come up hither and I will *show* thee the things which must take place."

Finally, we must bear in mind that the predictions of the Book relate to the immediate and not to the remote future, except in the ultimate sense which is essentially involved in prophetic literature. (See Chapter II.) It tells of "things which must shortly come to pass" (i: 1) and "that the time is at hand" (i: 3). Therefore, "seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book" (xxii: 10, 12). The words "after these," we repeat, relate to the order of the Seer's visual experiences, and not to the chronological fulfilment of the "things" described. Being spiritually prepared for what is to be shown him, we have in this section an account of his vision of the DRAMATIS PERSONAE of Righteousness.

Vision of God's Throne:—John's description of the Throne and of Him Who sat thereon is very meagre, as we should expect. Even a man who was in "the Spirit" could in no way describe Him Who is "past finding out." He is content to say, "that He Who sat was in appearance like a jasper stone and a sardius; and there was a rainbow round the Throne; in appearance like an emerald." In this description no sensible representation of Deity is attempted, and the glory in which God is veiled so dazzles the eye of the seer, that the impression left by the most brilliant components of light alone remains. Cf. I Tim. vi:16.) Nothing more need be said. Any attempt at an elaborate description of God, "Whom no man hath seen nor can see," would imperil faith in the seer's veracity. Besides, this is in perfect harmony with what John has written on this subject in his Gospel: "the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." (John i :18.) No one knoweth the Father save the Son. (Matt. xii :27.) The "jasper stone" stands for the Holiness of God, while the "sardius," a fiery red color, indicates His wrath.

It is not the description of the Throne, whose objective reality must, however, be considered subjectively, that concerns us so much as the impression the vision must have made on the seer, and the thoughts to which it may have given rise. The Throne of God contrasted immeasurably with another throne not far from where John lived his lonely life in exile. On that throne, on the Capitoline Hill at Rome, sat a man clad in imperial purple, and from that throne went forth wicked commands against the people of God. Decree after decree issued in persecution of the Christian Church. The man who sat thereon was regarded as the master of the world. To

human sight, nothing was higher than the throne of the Caesars. But to this man "in the Spirit," far above it, was the Throne which he was now permitted to gaze upon, and infinitely higher than the man in purple was the other Ruler. Around this Throne was the iris, the bow of promise, the token of the covenant. What cared he now about the decrees of Rome? He has seen the King. This is both prophecy and promise that the Lord's people and the Lord's work are safe.

Such experiences have been duplicated in the history of the Church. Long centuries after John's time, a King sat on England's throne who proved to be a "thorn in the flesh" to the Lord's anointed. But Bunyan, as in his famous allegory, "Pilgrim's Progress," it is recounted, while languishing in Bedford Jail, "on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. i:9), was permitted from the vantage-point of the "delectable mountains" to see the City of God. Such visions are proof against all wicked mandates.

If we are not privileged to see visions such as these, we can at least imbibe their thought. Above the ceaseless change, above the noise and confusion, the din and strife, above this contest between Good and Evil for supremacy, there is a Throne, and on that Throne sits the Ruler of the Universe. He does not make haste. His mills grind slowly. One day is with Him as a thousand years. The apostle John lived in the strength of this vision until the end.

The Resultant Conception.—Around God's Throne were twenty-four thrones, occupied by twenty-four elders clothed in white and wearing crowns. These represent the Church in both dispensations. There were twelve sons of Israel and twelve original Chris-

tian disciples. These are conquerors' crowns, emblems of the Church's victory.

Here, then, is the resultant of John's loftier viewpoint. Hitherto, he has treated of the Christian Church distinctively, but now he sees in vision (ideally in heaven, but actually, of course, on earth) God's people of all times. Both dispensations are taken into consideration. Much unnecessary confusion has resulted because this fact has not been sufficiently recognized.

Seven lamps are burning before the Throne, "which are the seven Spirits of God." Here is another instance of the relation the first chapter holds to the rest of the Book. We saw this sentence in i:4. This is the "unity in diversity" of the Spirit's activities. It is a figure of the Spirit in His manifold ministrations. "Before the Throne a glassy sea like crystal." It is the appearance and not the material that is referred to. The symbolism suggests the calm surrounding God's Throne, as the "sea" in this Book denotes the confusion and turbulence of nations. Here the "sea" is calm. What gave shape to the seer's thought was some kind of clear, transparent stone. We read that the ancient Egyptians made glass, the monuments showing that the same glass bottles were used nearly four thousand years ago, as in later times.

Basis of the Vision:—We have been introduced to the Throne-room of the Great King. The predominant idea has been that of royalty. It is very evident that here the thought changes to priesthood, though, considering the vision in all its bearings, the two ideas overlap. The Temple and its arrangements are present to the mind of the seer. The "glassy sea" primarily refers to the Laver, that stood between the altar and the Holy Place, in which the priests bathed before entering the sanctuary. In the "four living

creatures" we see the Cherubim that overshadowed the Mercy-seat. True, there were but two occupying that position, but we must remember that their figures were also embroidered on the curtains (Exod. xxvi: 1), so that the High-Priest, when he entered the Holy of Holies, was surrounded by them. They represent animated Creation, the idea being borrowed from Isaiah and Ezekiel. The four forms suggest the usual classification of animated creatures, viz:—rational beings, birds, tame animals and wild animals.

But in the vision all is idealized. The Temple assumes universal proportions. In the place of the Holy of Holies, where God's presence was manifested, the whole heaven becomes His Throne, and earth His footstool. The brazen laver becomes a sea, the Cherubim an animated representation of Creation, while the Church is idealized in the twenty-four elders. This is very similar to Isaiah's vision in the Temple. (Isa. vi.) He, too, saw the Lord seated on a Throne. Each of the Seraphim had six wings like the four creatures of John's vision, and both seers heard them cry, "Holy, holy, holy," etc. The whole scene represents God surrounded by the living objects of His care, who ascribe to Him all glory and praise, reminding us of the contents of Psalm ciii. The paean of praise of Revelation iv might well be termed the Song of Creation.

Vision of the Lamb:—John saw in "the right hand of Him Who sat on the Throne" a book or scroll, written on both sides, sealed with seven seals. A strong angel proclaims with a great voice, "Who is worthy to open the book and to loose its seals?" No one was found worthy in heaven or earth, and the seer was weeping because of this, when one of the elders told him to dry his tears, because "the Lion

of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, had prevailed to open the book and its seven seals."

The imagery here is based on Gen. xlix :8-10. The all-conquering and all-controlling power of Judah there predicted, symbolized the royalty and supreme sway of Jesus Christ. The promise of Jacob in the Scripture referred to was that this regal might, this conquering splendor should abide with Judah until Shiloh, the Peace-bringer, should come. Men have been wont to remark how this was fulfilled when Shiloh did come, how that then the power did depart from Israel when Rome's Eagles struck their talons into Judah's heart, and that since then the Jews have been a people scattered and peeled, hunted and hated; without sceptre, and a by-word of the nations. But this does not exhaust the meaning of the prophecy. To that must be added what is said of "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," in the Revelation. Instead of departing from Judah, it centred in the Shiloh, Who is of the tribe of Judah. All that had preceded the Advent of the Peace-bringer was but a dim fore-shadow. It was as incomparable to the might and majesty of the real Lion of the tribe of Judah, as "a painted ship upon a painted ocean" is to a real ship on a real ocean. A striking paradox is introduced here. The "Lion of the tribe of Judah" is also the "slaughtered Lamb" that "prevailed to open the book." This vision would awaken tender memories in the mind of the seer. It is obvious that he was present on that eventful day long before, when John the Baptist, whose disciple he was at the time, pointed a designating finger toward a Young Man approaching within sight of the little group and said of Him, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." (John i:29, 36.) That day, John, with Andrew, transferred his allegiance to Christ.

The statement of the Baptist implied that the whole of former revelation was summed up and concentrated in Christ. It is one of the links connecting John's Gospel with the Apocalypse.

These words lead us back to the great prophecy of Isa. liii, where there are found representations germane to the matter under review. "He was led as a Lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "By His knowledge shall He justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities." The prophetic symbol of the Lamb had its roots in the past, and pointed back to the lamb of the daily sacrifice, and especially to the lamb slain at the Passover, which was an emblem and sacrament of deliverance from bondage. Thus there are gathered into this vision of the slain Lamb, the conceptions of vicarious suffering, and of a death which is a deliverance. Therefore, the "Lamb standing, as if slain, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders" is the Recipient of universal adoration.

Inferences:—Once more we must call attention to the Theology of this Book. Were there no other source, it furnishes, as noted at the close of Chapter III, sufficient data upon which to build the doctrine of the Trinity. He Who is in the midst of the Throne is essentially the same as He Who sits on the Throne; and He Who is the Centre of all attraction in this vision, i. e., the Lamb, is "the Lord God, the Almighty, Who was and Who is to come." This plainly refers to Christ. Furthermore, the "seven eyes" of this Lamb are the "seven spirits of God," which in Chapter IV are represented by the "seven lamps burning before the throne." All these state-

ments are used interchangeably, and imply a Trinity in Unity.

When the Lamb takes the book or scroll from Him Who sits on the Throne, the elders and the living creatures fall down before the Lamb and sing a new song—the song of Redemption, the song of the new birth—as in the preceding chapter we most fittingly have the song of Creation. A new song, because previously to the redeeming work of Christ, the earlier Church, though it also is represented by the elders, could not have uttered this song. A new, i. e., a higher level, is now attained in the development of God's Kingdom, the work of Redemption has been accomplished. Heretofore, men had been singing the praises of Moses, but now Christ stands pre-eminent. The vision of the Transfiguration has become actual. Moses and Elijah have departed, and we see "Jesus only." (Matt. xvii: 1-8 and parallels.) They must, and do willingly, decrease, while He must increase. (John iii: 30.)

Stripped of its idealism, the narrative contemplates the Church as it is now upon the earth,—“with the Lamb in the midst of her, sending forth into all the world that sevenfold plentitude of His power and wisdom which the ‘horns’ and ‘eyes’ symbolize, in order to the perfecting of the saints unto the day of His Coming.”

The whole scene is intended to show the universal esteem in which Christ is held, and is a prophecy of His universal reign. He is acclaimed as the only One worthy to open the book. It is this acclamation that gives point to the narrative. We withhold from Him His due when we neglect to acknowledge His claims or refuse to witness for Him.

A certain note in this song is worthy of being singled out for special emphasis. It is the content of

this strain, indeed, that gives zest to the singers. The Lamb is considered worthy to open the scroll because He redeemed them and made them to reign. Such events are constantly happening, though little ado is made over them. If an obscure person were raised to a throne, the occasion would give rise to a great commotion. But Christ is ever lifting up people from sin and degradation to heavenly distinctions, in comparison with which earthly distinctions, however lofty, are not to be mentioned. The world manifests little interest in these things, but Christ continues to add wonder to wonder, and the time is coming when He will give to these erstwhile obscure ones the sovereignty of the earth. The life-story of many of earth's kings is not one to gloat over. Monsters in human form have too often held sway over the nations. But the time is coming when this kind of rule shall have ceased forever, and in its place will come the reign of righteousness.

Before proceeding to a consideration of the object of this vision we have been discussing, it might be well right here to gather up a few of the more suggestive details. The scene of the "Lion" that looked like a "Lamb" is one of contrasted characteristics which were very marked in Christ as He is portrayed in the Gospels. Strength and tenderness, severity and compassion, are seen in all His deeds and words. These are so obvious to those in any way familiar with the main incidents of His ministry, as to render further comment superfluous. The "seven horns" standing for Omnipotence, and the "seven eyes" for Omniscience, give us a pictorial representation of Christ's Deity. Sacrifice being the predominant note in these ascriptions of praise, it is intended to teach that worth is measured by cross-bearing. Something more than prayer and praise is required. These may

cost us little. They will not save the world, however, and bring it under the dominion of Christ. He must also have our "power and riches," etc. The order in which the praise is rendered is intentional and full of meaning. It was fitting that those who had been redeemed by His blood should be first in their ascription of praise. Then the hierarchy of angels joined them. It is a prophecy of the universal adoration of Christ.

Object of the Vision:—What we have just considered is still introductory to the main theme of the Book. We are not yet shown the conflict between Righteousness and Evil, but we are introduced in these two chapters to the Powers of Heaven that are waging the conflict in behalf of righteousness. This vision is intended to inspire confidence in John and in all who, like him, suffer for righteousness' sake. Governments periodically make a display of their military and naval armaments to encourage their own people, and to show the world that they are prepared to defend themselves, serving notice that their rights are not to be encroached upon.

But the main object is to be found in the explanation of the sealed roll. What is it? This image is doubtless borrowed from Isa. xxix:11, 12,—and we may define the Seals as symbols of events still hidden in mystery, but Divinely decreed. Why was there no one in heaven or earth sufficiently "worthy to open the book, or to look thereon," a fact that brought such consternation to the seer? We venture to assert that the scroll with the seven seals represents the history of the world as it lay hidden in the plan of God, and before it had been expanded in actual deeds. The opening of the seals, one by one, makes history. But who is to explain this history? It is full of enigmas to us. Our belief in the goodness of God seems in-

compatible with many of the facts of history. They fill us with perplexity, and John's weeping at the thought of the inability of men and angels to open the book is descriptive of the general state of the human mind in the face of many perplexing problems. But the solution of all our problems is found in Christ. He explains history. All history converges in Him. Even if it be insisted upon that the book is the Book of Redemption, the above argument is not seriously assailed. For the history of the world is little more than the unfolding of God's plan of redemption. Someone has said that history is "His story." Christ is the Key that unlocks all Divine mysteries. He has an answer for all our perplexities. He is the centre and source of the Universe; from Whom all things radiate. "For by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible . . . all things were created by Him and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." (Col. i: 16, 17.)

All this has been anticipatory. We are now prepared for the narration of the actual clash. This begins with the next chapter. It should be noticed here that all three series of judgments which form the core of the Book of Revelation, namely, the Seals (vi: 1), Trumpets (viii: 2) and Bowls (xv: 1), are sent from the Throne of God. (See iv: 5.) They imply three phases of the author's subject, which, for the want of better terms, we must name the Universal; the National, or Redemptive; and the Local, or Contemporary. Their striking similarity is one of the chief grounds on which we base our interpretation of the Revelation. These likenesses will be shown in turn as we meet them.

PART II.

UNIVERSAL ASPECT OF THE CONFLICT. VI-VII.

CHAPTER VII.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CONFLICT.

Revelation vi.

And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, Come. And I saw, and behold, a white horse, and he that sat thereon had a bow; and there was given unto him a crown: and he came forth conquering, and to conquer.

And when he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, Come. And another horse came forth, a red horse: and to him that sat thereon it was given to take peace from the earth, and that they should slay one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

And when he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, Come. And I saw, and behold, a black horse; and he that sat thereon had a balance in his hand. And I heard as it were a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and the oil and the wine hurt thou not.

And when he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, Come. And I saw, and behold, a pale horse:

and he that sat upon him, his name was Death; and Hades followed with him. And there was given unto them authority over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with famine, and with death, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And there was given them to each one a white robe; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, which should be killed even as they were, should be fulfilled.

And I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood; and the stars of the heaven fell unto the earth, as a fig tree casteth her unripe figs, when she is shaken of a great wind. And the heaven was removed as a scroll when it is rolled up; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the princes, and the chief captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman and freeman, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; and they say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand?

With this chapter we begin the study of the central theme of the Book of Revelation, the universal struggle between righteousness and evil. John witnesses the opening of the Seals by the Lamb, and describes them in order, Chapter VI containing the first six. The seven are divided into groups of four (vi:1-8), and three seals (vi:9, 12, and viii:1)—the former group being distinguished from the latter by the agency of the Four Living Creatures. As each Seal of the first group is opened, each one of the "Living Creatures" cries with a loud voice, "Come." The words "and see" in the Authorized Version are an interpolation and are unwarranted. The cry is not made to John as the statement in that version implies, but rather to the horseman who appears in response to the cry.

First Four Seals:—The first rider appears on a white horse, provided with a bow; a crown is given him and he goes forth to conquer. The imagery is somewhat similar to Zech. i:8-11. That "white" is the livery of Heaven we learn from Rev. i:14 and ii:17. With the Hebrews, the horse was the emblem of war. (See Job. xxxix:25, Psa. lxxvi:6, Prov. xxi:31, Jer. viii:6, Ezek. xxvi:10.) With the Romans the white horse was the emblem of victory. At the opening of the second seal, and in response to the "Come" of the second creature, appear a red horse and his rider, to whom is given a sword, and he is commissioned to take away peace from the earth by turning men against each other. It will be noticed that the color of each horse corresponds to the mission of its rider. Here in the second seal it is to shed blood.

The third creature cries "Come," and there appears a black horse with its rider, who holds a balance in his hand. "A voice in the midst of the four living

creatures" (i. e., different from theirs, the "as it were" leaving it indefinite in the mind of the seer) commissions this third rider. We hazard the conjecture that this is the "Voice" of Him Who is directing the seer. "A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny." The mention of the "balance" refers to the weighing of the wheat and barley, instead of the usual measuring. Hence we have scarcity symbolized. When the fourth seal was opened and the fourth creature had cried, "Come," there appeared a pale horse, whose rider was named Death, and Hades followed with him. They have authority over a fourth of the earth, "to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth." To the fourth rider alone is a name given.

We had better pause here to consider the significance of what has just been described. The opening of the seals is the pictorial unfolding of the struggle between the principles of Right and Wrong, all history being of Divine direction. But John sees the effect rather than the course of the conflict.

Principle of Interpretation:—The great detriment to a sane interpretation of the Revelation is the insistent way men have endeavored to fit the details of history into these symbolic features. In our study of the Revelation we have become convinced that the Book deals with principles rather than with literal facts, although the facts give basis to the principles enounced; that we do not so much have to deal with single historical events, *per se*, as with a general view of things. We are not to look for a literal fulfilment of them. Rather are we directed to the sources whence these trials spring and to the principles by which the victory is gained.

Nor are we to regard either of the four riders as a PERSON. They are CAUSES with which we have to do here. They are manifestations of certain truths connected with the kingdom of God. Thus in the first rider we have a representation of the Cause of Righteousness, and the opening of the first seal is the announcement that that Cause is in the world, that the Kingdom is in the midst of us and that overwhelming defeat awaits those who oppose it.

The interpretation now given of the first rider as one who comes forth to judgment on a sinful world, is confirmed by what is said of the other three. War, famine, death, and hades are not literally these things; they express the means used by God for the scourging of mankind. They must not be taken literally. Like all else in the Apocalypse, they are used symbolically, and in a general form express the calamities and woes sinful men have brought upon themselves by the rejection of their rightful King.

Connected with the opening of the second seal is the statement that men "kill" one another. The literal rendering is "slaughter," the same word that is used of the "slaughtered Lamb" in Chapter V. There is a suggestion of irony in the statement. Sacrifice in the form of a blessing, many people shrink from. But this very thing often overtakes them in the way of a curse. This is illustrated in the words of Christ, viz:—"He that saveth his life shall lose it." (Matt. xvi: 25.) By avoiding the sacrifice which lies at the very root of human destiny, they are obliged to substitute for it a different kind of sacrifice—they slaughter one another.

In the third seal we have the condition of things produced by scarcity. The figure of a "balance" is used many times in the Old Testament to express the idea of famine. The "penny" or denary, which

was the daily pay of a laborer, was sufficient to buy eight of the small "measures" referred to in this section, so that when it could purchase only one "measure," it is implied that wheat had risen eight times in price.

As in the interpretation of the first judgment, so here. The words are not to be taken literally. It is not famine in the strict sense with which we have to do, but the judgment of God under the form of famine. As in the former case, men saved their lives and thus lost them, so here they agree among themselves to live in peace; they will sow and reap, will plant vineyards and eat the fruit thereof. But there is no thought of God in their hearts. What they enjoy of this world's goods they regard as their own products; they are under obligations to no one (sic). And because the more men get the more do they want, this too eager pursuit of riches often defeats its own end; and under the influence of laws beyond the ken of the political economist, fields once bright with promise of golden harvests lie desolate and bare.

Before we leave the discussion of this seal, a word or two should be said about the direction not to hurt "the oil and the wine." There is much consolation here for the children of God. The oil and the wine were luxuries; they were for the homes of the rich; they are intended for the feast rather than for the exigencies of every-day life. The expression suggests the twenty-third psalm, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." This is the table referred to here. It is prepared for the righteous in the midst of their struggles with the world.

We need not linger on the fourth seal, as its terms require little elucidation. The name of the rider is

Death. But there "follows WITH" him, not AFTER him, Hades. His commission is to kill, and his inseparable attendant is a gloomy region beyond the grave. It may be necessary to say that the "death" alluded to is not that neutral separation of soul and body, but death as a judgment. A "fourth part of the earth" is afflicted. The judgments increase in intensity—under Trumpets a third part; under the Bowls, all creation.

Creation's Travail:—We have briefly examined the contents of the first four seals and the question arises, What bearing have they on the subject as a whole? The Book of Revelation teaches that the age-long struggle of which it treats, culminates in the coming of Christ in Judgment. Every judgment is a prophecy of the FINAL Judgment. Furthermore, every judgment may be regarded as A coming of God, each of which is a prophecy of THE FINAL Coming.

If we are right in thinking that "the book with the seven seals" is a symbolic representation of the world's history, then we can hardly escape the conviction that the "Come" of the four creatures,—generally admitted to be an ideal representation of creation,—is an expression of travail, and that the opening of the seals represents the various comings of God in history.

Creation's Deliverance:—The words of Paul are very suggestive right here, "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. . . . Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." (Rom. viii: 19-22.)

It must be evident that the language of the seals thus far considered, sounds very much like a pictorial representation of Paul's thought, and that the "Come" of the creatures is an expression of creation's travail for deliverance from bondage.

The present world is imperfect as adapted to man's imperfect state; and because imperfection does not satisfy, nothing in the world is satisfied. Even the dumb creation instinctively asks for a higher state of existence. From the beginning of things the beasts have found man to be a hard task-master, and from those beasts which could not yield him servitude, he has wrung pleasure, until all creation groans beneath his lash.

"Man's scent the untamed creatures scarce can bear,
As if his tainted blood defiled the air.
The beasts of burden linger on their way,
Like slaves that will not speak when they obey;
Their faces, when their looks to us they raise,
With something of reproachful patience gaze.
All creatures round us seem to disapprove,
Their eyes discomfort us with lack of love."

And nature itself presses with pain and sorrow on the very creatures it seems at the same time to nurture. The cold exterminates whole tribes, and the warmth of summer breeds countless numbers of smaller creatures which pester every grade of animal life.

There is a sense of imperfection, and that very sense is a cry for the perfect. There is a something it needs, and the Apostle tells us it shall yet be delivered from the bondage of corruption and brought into "the glorious liberty of the children of God." (Rom. viii: 21.)

Travail of the "Sons of God" (Fifth Seal):—

When the fifth seal was opened, John saw beneath the altar the souls of martyrs, whose blood cried out for vengeance. A white robe was given to each, and they were told to wait until others who were to be slain should be numbered with them.

In a general sense, the contents of this seal may be said to be a graphic expression of the travail of the "sons of God" referred to by Paul. "We groan within ourselves waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body." (Rom. viii:23.) It is a mistake to attempt with some to classify these martyrs as "Old Testament saints" or "New Testament saints," and explain every phrase of this paragraph in the light of the New Testament. We are dealing with symbols, and with a book teeming with Hebrew terminology, rather than Christian, that must be interpreted on the very broadest lines. They had been slain "on account of the word of God, and on account of the testimony which they had." Some would say that this falls short of the full expression of Christian testimony; that for Christians it is "the testimony of Jesus." But surely this is a mere juggling with words. The "testimony which they had" was evidently "the testimony of Jesus," for it is to Him they appeal in their cry, "How long, O Master, the holy and true," etc. To regard this cry as being made to "God as distinguished from Christ," because the same appellation is found elsewhere in the New Testament (cf. Acts iv:24, Jude 4), is to run counter to the very spirit of the Revelation, which affords no criterion for parallel interpretation, though it has everything in common with the rest of the Scriptures. Throughout this Book, Jesus is the Champion of Righteousness, and it is only natural to regard their appeal as being made personally to Him.

It has been said that they cannot be New Testament saints, because their cry corresponds to the spirit of the Old Testament rather than to that of the New. But it is only by forgetting the language of the Revelation that this argument can have any force. Surely this cry is not out of harmony with the usual terminology of the Book. Strictly speaking, it is the blood which, under the Mosaic Economy, was poured out at the base of the altar that calls for vengeance, not the martyrs themselves. All of which presupposes the limits of the Apocalypse. A mistake commonly made is that each seal is regarded as being opened at the beginning of the Christian era, a theory which this work combats. The main theme of the Revelation recognizes no distinction between the Mosaic and Christian dispensations. This is especially true of the section we are now discussing, which carries us from the first moment men recognized a problem of Evil, until the day that that problem is solved and sin vanquished.

In response to their query, they are told "that they should rest yet a little time until their fellow-servants also, and their brethren, who were about to be killed as they were, should be fully numbered"; and a white robe given to each of them. This is frequently spoken of in the Revelation as the raiment of the redeemed. The faithful in Sardis are promised that they shall walk in white, and the Laodicean church is exhorted to buy "white garments." The "fine linen" of the Bride "is the righteous acts of the saints." (xix:8.) Now the fact that they did not possess these white robes before, has been urged as proof positive that these are Old Testament martyrs, and that the robes are symbols of a righteousness longed for by Old Testament saints, but never fully bestowed upon them until Jesus came; that at death they were not

made perfect. But truly, it is beside the mark to argue relative degrees of bliss for the righteous dead, according to the accident of time. The presentation of the "white robe" must not be taken literally, neither does it mark a higher degree of bliss for the saints of the new dispensation than for those of earlier ages.

Deliverance of the "Sons of God":—There is a great underlying motive here. We firmly believe in the proposition that lies at the basis of our whole argument that the Apostle treats not of a period, nor of a dispensation, but of God's government of the world in every age. There is in this Book no superficial distinction between the "Old Testament Church" and the "New Testament Church." The Seer's horizon is as wide as time. When he describes the local features of his great theme, certain marks of identity are drawn for the benefit of his immediate readers, but these only prove our contention. The universal features are resumed at the close of the Book. These "souls," therefore, are martyrs to the cause of Righteousness without respect to time, and we fancy we can detect the underlying purpose of his vision. The Church in John's day was suffering; many were sacrificing their lives for the Faith. John himself was an exile "on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus." If Paul felt constrained to write to the church in Thessalonica concerning the condition of the departed, may it not be conceivable that John was likewise impelled to encourage steadfastness on the part of Christians in that great crisis, by showing them that God's faithful martyrs were in glory, and that their blood cried out for justice? The presentation of the "white robes" was just that little touch needed to make the picture complete. "For this we say to you, by the word of the Lord, that we

the living, who remain to the coming of the Lord, shall by no means precede those who fell asleep." (1 Thess. iv:15.) What Paul gave the Thessalonians in words, John gave his readers in pictures.

Two questions troubled the saints of John's day, that have troubled the righteous in every age. The first is, Why do the righteous suffer, while the wicked flourish as a green bay-tree? If the Right is destined to prevail, why are the supporters of the Right persecuted? Why does not God stretch forth His Arm and annihilate the persecutors of His people?

The second question is, What is the present condition of the righteous dead?

This vision is a solution of these problems. In answer to the first question, it teaches that God's method of eradicating evil is through sacrifice. That the "souls" are seen "underneath the altar" is explained by the fact that the blood of the sacrifices was poured at the base of the brazen altar, but John sees not the "blood" of the martyrs, but their "souls," their lives, of which the blood was the essence. Those who were faithful unto death are victors in the strife, and "white robes," emblems of their purity, are given them. That is the answer of the vision to the second question.

Sixth Seal.—At the opening of the sixth seal there was "a great earthquake," the sun became black, the moon red, and the stars fell like unripe figs when shaken by a great wind.

Highly colored as this description is to us, it is in keeping with the Oriental mode of expression. It is taken partly from the language of the prophets, partly from the words of our Lord. Thus Joel said, "And I will show wonders in the heavens and the earth, blood and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, be-

fore the great and terrible day of the Lord come." (Joel ii: 30, 31.) So Haggai, "For thus saith the Lord of Hosts: Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations." (Hag. ii: 6, 7.)

Our Lord spoke in a similar strain, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the power of the heavens shall be shaken." (Matt. xxiv: 29.)

In their historical connections, these statements anticipate "the day of the Lord."

The events described therein prepare the way for the coming of the Lord. This is obviously the teaching of the sixth seal. It carries us on to the consummation. The heavens and the earth pass away, the kings and the great men, chief captains and rich men, bondmen and free, seek death and death flees from them. Their one desire is to hide "from the face of Him Who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb."

The Consummation:—Surely we are at the end of the great conflict of which this Book treats. The cry of the souls under the altar has been answered. Chap. xvi: 17-21 presents many features parallel to this description. A failure to rightly account for the repetitive portions of the Revelation can only lead to confusion in interpretation. To say that such repetitions have no significance, and to explain them on the principle of "recapitulation," is to beg the whole question and make "confusion worse confounded." We have assumed all along that the seer is successfully working out one of the most mysterious problems of life. His investigation is most thorough. He goes

to the very beginning and traces it down to his own day; then, upon the very principles that have governed him thus far, proclaims the final issue. The most obviously just interpretation of this sixth seal is that it brings us to the very eve of the final catastrophe. This interpretation is based on the assumption that the three series of judgments, Seals, Trumpets, and Bowls, necessarily imply three different, but related, phases of the problem with which the Book deals.

Here, then, the primary application must be to the consummation of the age. While in xvi: 17-21, on the assumption that the seer is dealing with the local aspect, the primary application must be to the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus.

There can be little doubt that we have in Chapter VI an epitome of the conflict between the forces of Good and Evil viewed in its effects on the enemies of righteousness.

In this graphic synopsis no details of history have been given, no particular wars or famines described. Everything has been pictured in the most general terms, the burden of the six seals being that God is King over all the earth, and that His coming to judge the world will affect us according to our attitude in this great conflict. The Coming of Christ will be to the saint a blessed hope; to the sinner a fearful doom.

It is useless to close our eyes to the fact that there is wrath in God against sin. This does not imply that it blazes forth on every occasion of wrong-doing. But men should not for this reason persuade themselves that God looks askance at sin. He is long-suffering, but not unregarding. There is a cumulative quality in sin and when "the cup of the Amorite is full" and the cry of the righteous

souls under the altar is heard, judgment will not be delayed. Shallow thinkers are they who suppose that God is ever mild and gentle towards man, however base his conduct may be. There are many who find security in the thought that God as a Father will not punish His offspring whatever may be their offense. But it is a false security.

That God is love, the Scriptures repeatedly emphasize. It is this that awakens in our hearts a love for Him. But were God not as pronouncedly opposed to sin as He is in favor of righteousness, He could not be perfect. What man of all those who are offended at the thought of justice in God which attaches penalty to sin, would think it love to himself and others should the government of his country abrogate all laws, and virtually say to evil men, "Go forth and do your will—none shall dare to make you afraid"? Those who a moment before were loudest in their remonstrance against the thought of God being so harsh as to punish sin, would be among the first to protest against lifting all restraint from the criminally inclined and endangering society to that extent. The notion of a Righteous Governor of the world Who rewards men according to their works, is in harmony with that notion of earthly government which all the wise and good unite to approve. Did God not show hatred of sin, it would be difficult to understand why good men should manifest such antagonism toward it.

The "wrath of the Lamb" must be explained in the same way. Jesus Christ is the Revealer of God. But if He reveals only the love-nature of the Deity, then He is not as affirmed by Paul "the fulness of the Godhead" (Col. ii:9). But He was stern and denunciatory as well as gentle and tender in His attitude towards men. Hypocritical men were

made to wince in His presence. He burned with indignation against sin, and showed wrath against all forms of evil-doing. The tenderness of Jesus is so patent that there is danger of overlooking this wrath-principle in Him. So the sixth Seal carries us on to that day which is to be distinguished as the "Day of Wrath."

CHAPTER VIII.

VISION OF THE REDEEMED.

Revelation vii.

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that no wind should blow on the earth, or on the sea, or upon any tree. And I saw another angel ascend from the sun-rising, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a great voice to the four angels, to whom it was give to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we shall have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed, a hundred and forty and four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the children of Israel.

Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand; of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand:

Of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand:

Of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand:

Of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand:

Of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand:
 Of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand:
 Of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand:
 Of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand:
 Of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand:
 Of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand:
 Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve
 thousand.

After these things I saw, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation, and of all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands; and they cry with a great voice, saying, Salvation unto our God which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels were standing round about the throne, and about the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, These which are arrayed in the white robes, who are they, and whence came they? And I say unto him, My lord, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God; and they serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall spread his tabernacle over them. They shall hunger no more; neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any

heat: for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Counterpart of Sixth Seal:—We should naturally expect here the opening of the seventh seal, but this does not occur until we reach the next chapter. What we have in this chapter is a vision, the description of which is greatly heightened by contrast with the closing scene of Chapter VI. The projection of the vision of the redeemed at this point does not break the continuity of the seer's thought. On the contrary, it establishes it. We shall see that this vision is a part of the contents of the sixth seal—the counterpart of that already described. It is an evidence that the Book of Revelation is not a series of disconnected, unrelated prophecies and visions, but a systematic and artistic whole.

In this chapter we have a two-fold vision of God's people. In the first part four angels stand at the four corners of the universe holding in leash the forces of nature, while another angel comes from the direction of the East to seal the "servants of God." The Apostle does not witness the process of sealing, but only hears the number of those that are sealed.

The Author's Plan:—That after so complete a catastrophe as that recorded at the close of the last chapter, any further reference to judgment of any kind should be made may appear strange. This seeming inconsistency may, however, be explained by calling attention to the various aspects in which the author has presented his subject. In chapters vi-vii we have the universal aspect, and in xiii-xx:6 the local, the Book closing with the resumption of the universal fea-

tures. The struggle, therefore, is still on, even though the seer has pictured the complete triumph of righteousness.

He has an object in treating his theme in this manner. As already referred to, this is to encourage endurance on the part of his persecuted co-religionists by showing them the relation of their struggle to the general conflict, and by assuring them that in remaining steadfast they contribute toward the final victory. Lest they think the victory already won, after the recital of such an overwhelming catastrophe, he speaks of further conflicts and judgments.

"Ne'er think the victory won,
Nor lay thine armor down;
Thy arduous work will not be done
Till thou obtain the crown."

The "four winds" indicate the universality of the judgment spoken of. In its main features this vision resembles that of Ezekiel ix, and the teaching of both refers to the preservation of God's people in the midst of His judgments on the wicked.

God's True People a Unit:—One's first impression on reading this seventh chapter is that the first part must certainly refer to the Old Testament saints. These "servants of our God" are gathered "out of every tribe of the sons of Israel." But we must again refer to the universal character of the Book's theme. Strictly speaking, there is no distinction drawn in the standing of God's people. The accident of time or racial distinction never enters into the conception. The phraseology may be distinctively Hebrew, but its interpretation involves wider principles.

As the judgments of the six seals already considered must be interpreted in general terms, so with these names of the tribes of Israel.

"Israel" is a term inclusive of God's true people everywhere and in every age. This argument is further confirmed by the like definite number sealed out of every tribe. We have already had sufficient evidence that the numbers mentioned in this Book are not to be disregarded. They often hold the key to the interpretation of those parts in which they are found. The number twelve is a familiar one to all Bible readers. There were twelve Patriarchs and twelve Apostles. The whole number of the sealed is symbolical of completeness: twelve plus twelve multiplied by one thousand equals 144,000. It signifies that God has not failed in His purpose and that not one of His people has been lost. Satan has sifted them, but not a grain has fallen to the earth. (Luke xxii: 31; Amos ix: 9.)

The application of the law of "inclusion and exclusion" is another reason for regarding this two-fold vision as teaching but one truth. The name of Dan is omitted, while that of Levi, which never appears in any list of the Tribes of Israel as a separate entity, is included. This being the priestly tribe, it had no distinctively separate apportionment of the land like the others. (Josh. xiv: 3, 4.) It comprised a privileged class having its domain among all the tribes. But although "Levi" had no inheritance in the earthly Canaan, he is not to be excluded from the heavenly. The awful mystery of the blotting of a name out of the Book of Life is suggested in this substitution of the name of Levi for that of Dan. (Cf. iii: 5.) We are reminded of the rejection of Judas (John vi: 70) and the substitution of another in his stead (Acts i: 15-26).

It has been suggested, as a reason for excluding Dan, that the only Old Testament narrative in which the tribe played a part is that respecting the worship of idols. (Judges xviii: 1-31.) Thus, the declaration in Rev. xxii: 15, "without are idolaters," is here symbolically represented by the omission of Dan. We may regard it as a forceful protest against idolatry, a sin "wholly disqualifying for admission into the number of God's saints."

The name of Joseph, too, which was not borne by any tribe, is substituted for that of Ephraim. While his brother, Manasseh, is mentioned, it must be remembered that Ephraim as well as Dan was addicted to idolatry (Judges xvii-xviii, I Kings xii: 25, 29). This tribe also was foremost in the defection of the Ten Tribes from the House of David (II Sam. ii: 9; Isa. vii: 9, 17). Ephraim is the "confederate of the enemies of Judah (Isa. vii: 2. Cf. Hosea v: 3 and passim).

In placing Benjamin last, the author has followed the order of time, as, in the order of Christian conceptions, Judah is placed first. These considerations lead us to the conclusion that we have here not two distinct classes of people, but a two-fold vision of the redeemed of all nations. "The one hundred and forty-four thousand of the tribes of Israel" are the same as the "great multitude out of every nation." They symbolize the Church throughout all time, from the day when the "white horse and his rider went forth conquering and to conquer," during the successive ages represented to the seer in the visions of the first six seals, i. e., down to the final judgment.

It is no objection to this interpretation that the "multitude" cannot be numbered while the forepart of the vision gives a definite number of the sealed

out of twelve tribes, or that this multitude is gathered not out of twelve tribes, but from among all nations; or, again, that those who compose it have not been "sealed," so as to escape the judgments; but have actually come "out of the great tribulation" (v. 14). These differences are explained by the author's attempt to express a universal truth, through a racial consciousness.

Seer's Literary Tendency:—But why present the same truth on two different lines? What motive had the seer in doing this? That he had a motive may well be inferred from the many instances in this Book of conscious, artistic skill. A study of his writings reveals a tendency to set forth the same object in various lights, leading to a climax. The late Wm. Alexander, D. D., the Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, likened this method to that of a musician who in the first few measures of his composition reveals his theme, then seems to leave it, but which throughout his work recurs again and again, finally bringing it to the climax in the "grand finale." To illustrate:—the theme of John's Gospel is the Deity of Christ, and the prologue presents a clear outline of the subject-matter treated in the body of the work; and while at times the theme itself is kept in the background while the evidences of the truth of his proposition are brought to the fore, yet he never allows his readers to lose sight of the theme, which he brings to a grand climax in the closing chapter.

So in his first epistle. The theme, The Divine Life, is gently touched upon in the words "He that doeth righteousness is born of God." (I John ii: 29.) We hear no more of it until in the course of his epistle he says with increased emphasis: "Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin

(I John iii:9.) Once more we hear him say in deeper, though tenderer tones: "Every one that loveth is born of God" (I John iv:7). and then, like the musician, gathers up all the forces of his theme in the grand climax, "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world" (I John v:4).

Israel's Primacy:—Then, again, there was present to the seer's mind the primacy of Israel in the matter of hearing the Gospel of Christ. It was to be preached first "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matt. x:5, 6; see Matt. xv:24; Acts xii:46; & Rom. i:16.) A question that was much to the fore in apostolic times, especially in the Jerusalem Church was, What of the future of Judaism?

Judaism's Future:—The seer has anticipated his answer to this question by his delineation of all God's people as comprising a definite number from all the tribes of Israel, thus merging all racial distinctions. This definite number, 144,000, will be met with again in Chapter XIV, where our view of the Apocalypse obliges us to answer this question in detail. It is unnecessary, therefore, here to do more than give a hint that such a problem awaits us, that in the present vision the true Israel has been merged in the great company of all the saints, and that the ancient name is applied to all God's people irrespective of time or nationality.

These examples, if they do not explain, at least exhibit a characteristic of the author to reiterate certain truths.

We have digressed somewhat from the immediate point in hand, but inasmuch as the above-mentioned tendency, meeting us at various places throughout the Book, called for explanation, the digression might not be considered unnecessary.

Innumerable Multitude:—To resume, the 144,000 sealed are "the great multitude which no man could number." The one statement prepares us for the other. It must be borne in mind that John does not see the 144,000 being sealed. He simply hears the number. When he does see them they cannot be numbered. After he "heard" the number of the sealed, he "saw" a great multitude out of every nation standing before the Throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes and palms in their hands. The white robes are emblems of purity. They "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." It must be noticed that they are a palm-bearing multitude, and in order to get the seer's idea, we must study the sealing and palm-bearing together. The Apostle has in mind incidents of Old Testament history when describing his vision.

The Seal:—The sealing represents an ancient significant custom. It was a token of proprietorship put by the owner on his property, an official stamp giving validity to a document, or a pledge of inviolability guarding a treasure. This "seal" on the foreheads of the redeemed multitude betokened security, ratification, and ownership.

We believe that the background of this scene is the institution of the Passover. God's own are marked before the final plague is sent on the Egyptians. John's account of the sealing transaction at least suggests the descent of the destroying Angel who killed the first-born of the Egyptians and spared all Israelites who obeyed the command to strike all lintels and door-posts with the blood of the Passover lamb. (Exod. xii.)

If this be so, then the latter part of this vision is of a supplementary character. Besides being

a two-fold vision presenting the same truth with increased emphasis, there is progress of thought. The sealing of the one hundred forty-four thousand, before the winds held by the four angels are let loose, marked them as God's own.

The Palms:—When John saw those who had been sealed, they were bearing palms. If we are right in our conjecture regarding the forepart of the vision, then the latter part must depict the Feast of Tabernacles. And with this the narrative itself agrees. They are bearing palms in token of their wilderness life and their escape from bondage. They came out of great tribulation and washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. We heartily believe that the basis of all this is Israel's experience in Egypt and in the wilderness which was celebrated in the recurring feasts, Passover and Tabernacles. Israel's struggle with the Egyptians is here made a type of the Church's struggle with the world. The vision carries us to that time when the conflict is over and the children of God are enjoying the felicities of Heaven. The vision of the "great multitude which no man could number, out of every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues," is an answer to the question, "Are they few that are saved?" (Luke xiii:23.) It was intended as a consolation to the Christian Church in the midst of its struggles with cruel persecutors.

There has been no interruption in the opening of the seals. The author has but shown the final result of the universal struggle first, for the wicked (vi:12-17), and then for the righteous (vii). We have completed the first great cycle of the Book's teaching regarding the conflict between Good and Evil—its universal aspect.

PART III.

NATIONAL OR REDEMPTIVE ASPECT.
VIII-XII.

CHAPTER IX.

JUDGMENT FOR SACRIFICE.

Revelation viii-ix.

And when he opened the seventh seal, there followed a silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stand before God; and there were given unto them seven trumpets.

And another angel came and stood over the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should add it unto the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel taketh the censer; and he filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast it upon the earth: and there followed thunders, and voices, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

And the first sounded, and there followed hail and fire, mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of the earth was burnt up, and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; and there died the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, even they that had life; and the third part of the ships was destroyed.

And the third angel sounded, and there fell from heaven a great star, burning as a torch, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of the waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; that the third part of them should be darkened, and the day should not shine for the third part of it, and the night in like manner.

And I saw, and I heard an eagle, flying in mid heaven, saying with a great voice, Woe, woe, woe, for them that dwell on the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, who are yet to sound.

And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven fallen unto the earth: and there was given to him the key of the pit of the abyss. And he opened the pit of the abyss; and there went up a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth; and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

And it was said unto them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree, but only such men as have not the seal of God on their foreheads. And it was given them that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when it striketh a man. And in those days men shall seek death, and shall in no wise find it; and they shall desire to die, and death fleeth from them. And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared for war; and upon their heads as it were crowns like unto gold, and their faces were as men's faces. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to war. And they have tails like unto scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men five months. They have over them as king the angel of the abyss: his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek tongue he hath the name Apollyon.

The first woe is past; behold, there come yet two Woes hereafter.

And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the horns of the golden altar which is before God, one saying to the sixth angel, which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound at the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, which had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, that they should kill the third part of men. And the number of the

armies of the horsemen was twice ten thousand times ten thousand: I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates as of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone: and the heads of the horses are as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceedeth fire and smoke and brimstone. By these three plagues was the third part of men killed, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone, which proceeded out of their mouths. For the power of the horses is in their mouths, and in their tails: for their tails are like unto serpents, and have heads; and with them they do hurt. And the rest of mankind, which were not killed with these plagues, repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and the idols of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of stone, and of wood; which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk: and they repented not of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

In this section which includes Chapters VIII-XII we are to deal with the national or redemptive aspect of this conflict. By this we mean that the section now to be considered treats of the great struggle in its relation to the ancient people of God, ending with the birth of Christ.

Position of Seventh Seal:—Before looking at the particulars of Chapters VIII-IX we must ascertain the relation of this seventh seal to its predecessors and also to what follows. This inquiry is important, for our view of the position occupied by the seventh seal will determine our view of the Trumpets and the

Bowls, and especially of the seventh in each series. Believing as we do that Revelation VI and VII give us the results of the whole struggle from different view-points, we are constrained to believe that Chapter VII is a link connecting Chapters VI and VIII rather than what it might at first seem, a wedge cleaving them into separate portions. This determines the position of the seventh seal in the series to which it belongs.

But now what is its relation to the subject-matter of the rest of this section? Although we do not meet with the Bowls until we reach Chapter XVI the connection between the three series of judgments is so intimate that to understand the prominent position occupied by the seventh seal it is necessary to refer briefly to the place occupied by the Trumpets and Bowls also.

Relation of Seals, Trumpets and Bowls:—The reader must here be apprised of the fact that the last member of both the Trumpet (xi:15) and Bowl series (xvi:17) is marked by much greater force than belongs in either case to the six preceding members. The contents of the Trumpets and Bowls are summed up and concentrated in the last member of each. The interesting question therefore arises, How far does the development of the seals extend? A comparison of the contents of the seventh trumpet with those of the seventh bowl suggests the hypothesis that the latter flow out of the former. This analogy, therefore, leads us to believe that the seven trumpets belong to this seventh seal. There is a correspondence between the last bowl and the last trumpet, such as we find between the last trumpet and the last seal. It being obviously impossible to isolate either the Seals or the Trumpets, the general symmetry of the Book militates against isolating the Bowls, also.

Therefore, we conclude that the contents of the Trumpets and the Bowls are developed out of the seventh seal, which sums up and concentrates the contents of the six preceding seals. (Cf. xi: 19 & xv: 1.)

It is not meant by this that there is a continuous connection between the Bowls and the other two series of judgments. But some connection there must be. That the seventh seal is the connecting link between the various groups of judgments is obvious. Six seals relate to the universal aspect, the seventh contains the seven trumpets, which relate to the national aspect, and the difficulty of seeing the connection between the Trumpets and Bowls lies in the latter's relation to the local aspect, the treatment of which must be preceded by the introduction of the *DRAMATIS PERSONAE* of evil. This obscures the necessary connection. But if we bear in mind that the seven trumpets blown by the seven angels comprise the contents of the seventh seal, the whole series of which is opened by "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," and that the seven bowls are poured out by the same seven angels, which in reality are not seven, but one, and that one, evidently the "Angel" Who communicates the Revelation to John (xvii: 1), we shall have no trouble in seeing the connection between all three—Seals, Trumpets and Bowls. Add to this the witness of viii: 5, which is a general statement, the details of which are given in the delineation of the sounding of the seven trumpets, and we can hardly resist this conclusion. This argument harmonizes perfectly with our expressed belief that the book with the seven seals represents symbolically the history of the world. The position of the seventh seal affords a powerful argument for the unity of the Revelation. We shall have occasion again to refer

to these various judgments when their place in the structure of the Book will be made clearer.

Half-hour's "Silence":—When this seal is opened "there is silence in heaven about half an hour." Seven angels who "stand before God" are given seven trumpets. Another angel stands over the altar of sacrifice with a golden censer. Incense is given him and he offers up the prayers of the saints on the golden altar, after which he fills the censer with fire from the altar of sacrifice and casts it to the earth. This is followed by "thunders, and voices, and lightnings and an earthquake." The silence of half an hour in heaven probably refers to a suspension of judgment. In iv: 5 we read of the "lightnings and voices and thunders" that proceed from the Throne, and in viii: 5 we again meet with them. The probable interpretation is that this "silence" is a brief cessation of these. But how brief? What was the duration of this period of silence? Are we to interpret the "half-hour" literally? Again we must say that the symbolic language in which the Book is written forbids it. In the study of an author it were well to keep in mind his literary and doctrinal characteristics. In John's Gospel we read of an "hour" which determined the actions and sufferings of Christ. The reference is not to some unrelated period, but to a decisive time that gathers up and concentrates all the antecedents of that great event which was to take place when that "hour" struck. The "half" of anything in a Book of this character denotes not so much an actual half as a broken whole, and doubtless here means that the course of events has been interrupted. It is the calm before the storm when men are saying, "Peace! Peace!" and there is no peace.

The Incense:—The offering of the incense, descriptive of the "prayers of the saints" is sugges-

tive. It is to remind the reader of this Book that God hears and answers prayer. The cry of the "souls underneath the altar, Lord, how long!" is not unheeded. And it is significant, too, that it is the fire from the altar that brings forth the "thunders and voices, and lightnings, and an earthquake." This may teach us that the God Who accepts the sacrifices of His people sends judgment upon their enemies; and that the fire which consumes the sacrifices resulting from the persecution of the world, rebounds with terrible force upon the perpetrators. (Cf. Ezek. x: 2; Luke xii: 49.)

As already suggested, we need not think of these "angels" as numerically "seven." We have learned in our study of this Book so far to interpret its numbers in accordance with its general symbolic character. Seven is the number of unity. The "seven spirits" are God's one Spirit. The "seven churches" are His one Church. The "seven seals," "seven trumpets," and "seven bowls" while embodying many judgments are in reality one.

The First Four Trumpets:—These angels prepare to sound their trumpets. At the sound of the first four "there followed hail and fire mingled with blood," a mountain of fire cast into the sea, a star burning like a torch into the rivers, making them intensely bitter, and the darkening of the sun, moon and stars. A "third part" of the objects on which these judgments descend are affected in each case. The "third part" may mean nothing more than that a large part was destroyed. The first four judgments fall on inanimate nature. Under the last three trumpets men suffer.

Interpretation of Vision:—As in the case of the opening of the six preceding seals, we must not look for literalness here. This is picture-language and the

Apostle sees them only in vision. They are an intensified conception of the Plagues sent upon Egypt, which serve as the background of this vision. But it is not mere rhetoric. The judgments on Egypt belong to the one teleologic scheme portrayed throughout this Book. They are not isolated instances of Divine intervention. They are essentially typical of God's constant care of His people, though the various manifestations of it may differ with the circumstances and times. This teaches us that all the judgments of God have much in common, and is another evidence of the assertion often upheld in the course of this study, that the theme of the Revelation covers the whole history of humanity and of God's government of the world.

The Eagle of Woe:—The first four trumpets having been blown, an incident of peculiar force and solemnity is interjected here. An Eagle (not an "angel" as A. V.) flies in mid-heaven crying, so that it might be heard in the most distant places of the earth, "Woe, woe, woe, to those who dwell on the earth, by reason of the remaining voices of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound." There is no doubt that this incident is designed to impress the objects of Divine wrath with an added sense of terror. The seer thinks of the Eagle not as a symbol of majesty, but of swiftness and strength, as of a bird hastening to its prey. The three "remaining voices" represent an intensified form of judgments about to descend.

Fifth Trumpet:—With the sounding of the fifth trumpet he sees "a star fallen out of heaven into the earth." To this "star" is given "the key of the pit of the abyss," out of which rises a thick smoke darkening the sun and air. The "key" doubtless is given by Christ Who holds the key (i: 18). The "abyss" de-

notes the present abode of the Devil and his angels as distinguished from "the lake of fire" (xxii: 10). Out of the smoke came locusts having the power of scorpions. They devote their attacks to those who have not the mark of God on their foreheads, and they must not "kill" but only "torment" them, and that for a period of "five months," this being the length of time locusts are popularly believed to continue their ravages—April to September.

King of the Locusts:—In the eleventh verse of this ninth chapter we are distinctly told that the locusts had as king "the angel of the abyss." Comparing this statement with the authoritative declaration of the first chapter to the effect that "the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches," we take it that there is a like connection between the "star fallen out of heaven," ix: 1, and "the angel of the abyss" of ix: 11. These different titles refer to Satan's past and present status. He is a "fallen angel." We might here adduce the testimony of the Old Testament also. In its conception of "the host of heaven" a star and an angel are kindred ideas—Job xxxviii: 7; Psa. ciii: 20, 21. The analogy of Isa. xiv: 12, and Luke x: 18 strengthens our contention. It should be observed that it is not said to be "a star of heaven," but that his fall is from thence as of one unduly exalted. The fifth Seal and the fifth Trumpet both have reference to the invisible world, the one to the domain of heaven, the other to the world of darkness.

The projection of the chief opponent of the cause of righteousness at this point is not a little perplexing at first. Up to the present we have seen only the distinctively Divine agents, and the struggle has been presented thus far from the Divine point of view. So far, with one exception only, and that only seemingly, namely the fifth seal, it has been overwhelming vic-

tory for the forces of righteousness. But now the arch-enemy of mankind seems to assume the offensive. But let us look a little more closely into the matter. This, like all its predecessors, is also a judgment on the wicked. The "locusts" that come out of the abyss are told not to hurt the grass, nor green thing, nor any tree, "but only the men who have not the seal of God on their foreheads." The limitations of their operations are instructive, and help us toward a correct interpretation. To repeat, they must not "kill," only "torment," and that only for a period of "five months." It must also be borne in mind that there is no initiative in their attack. While like all the other judgments recorded here in that it is directed against the wicked, it differs from them all in the above-mentioned particulars. It is a permissive power which Satan is here represented as exerting.

It may be thought that what has been said of Satan in this connection would be incongruous with his general character and purpose, that it would be Satan casting out Satan, a kingdom divided against itself. To which we reply that this is just the point here: that God makes even the wrath of men to praise Him; that Satan and his hosts are COMPELLED to carry out the Divine purpose. In its ultimate reach it exemplifies the truth that God "worketh all things after the counsel of His Own Will." (Eph. i: 11). He is Sovereign, and the power of Satan is, after all, only permissive.

The description of these locusts is highly colored, as in most cases in the Revelation, in order that the terror of the judgment might be felt. Literally speaking, locusts are noxious creatures from which man has no means of defending himself.

The last three "woes" are so terrible in their import

that the coming of each is announced beforehand. "Behold, there come yet two woes hereafter."

Sixth Trumpet:—The second woe, which proceeds in consequence of the sounding of the sixth trumpet, reveals four angels at the river Euphrates, holding in restraint two hundred million horsemen. These are loosed and the horses are described as emitting "fire, smoke and brimstone" from their mouths, and stinging like serpents through their tails. Like the locusts of the fifth trumpet the horses are described in preternatural terms.

Ordinary locusts and horses could not convey images of sufficient terror. Perhaps the background of all this was the experience of Israel with the Eastern powers, Assyria, Babylon and Persia.

The seer adds very significantly that "the rest of men who were not killed in these plagues repented not of the works of their hands," etc. This statement has sufficient point when we recall the obduracy of ancient Israel in the face of the many temporal judgments sent upon that nation. Had they repented in consequence of the preceding six, they would have been spared the more fearful judgment yet to come.

We began this chapter with the statement that the section which it introduces deals with the problem as it affected ancient Israel. In some instances the judgments, as typified in the "trumpets," are sent upon Israel's enemies. The first four may be thus classified, while the fifth has a GENERAL application. The sixth obviously falls on Israel alone, and gathers up in itself the history of the "chosen people" from the domination of the Assyrian power under Tiglath-pileser (II Kings xv: 29) until the destruction of Jerusalem under the Roman Titus, as symbolically set forth under the seventh Trumpet described in xi: 15-19.

CHAPTER X.

FINISHED REDEMPTION.

Revelation x-xi.

And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, arrayed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire; and he had in his hand a little book open; and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left upon the earth; and he cried with a great voice, as a lion roareth; and when he cried, the seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying, Seal up the things, which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. And the angel which I saw standing upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his right hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created the heaven and the things that are therein, and the earth and the things that are therein, and the sea and the things that are therein, that there shall be time no longer: but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets. And the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard it again speaking with me, and saying, Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel that standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, saying unto him that he

should give me the little book. And he saith unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but in thy mouth it shall be sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and when I had eaten it my belly was made bitter. And they say unto me, Thou must prophesy again over many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.

And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and one said, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. And the court which is without the temple leave without, and measure it not; for it hath been given unto the nations: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months. And I will give unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks, standing before the Lord of the earth. And if any man desireth to hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man shall desire to hurt them, in this manner must he be killed. These have the power to shut the heaven, that it rain not during the days of their prophecy: and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they shall desire. And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that cometh up out of the abyss shall make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. And from among the peoples and

tribes and tongues and nations do men look upon their dead bodies three days and a half, and suffer not their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. And they that dwell on the earth rejoice over them, and make merry; and they shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth.' And after the three days and a half the breath of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which beheld them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they went up into heaven in the cloud; and their enemies beheld them. And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell; and there were killed in the earthquake seven thousand persons: and the rest were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

And the second Woe is past: behold, the third Woe cometh quickly.

And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sit before God on their thrones, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, which art and which wast; because thou hast taken thy great power, and didst reign. And the nations were wroth, and thy wrath came, and the time of the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward to thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear thy name, the small and the great; and to destroy them that destroy the earth.

And there was opened the temple of God that is in heaven; and there was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant; and there followed lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail.

The Strong Angel:—The description of the "strong angel" of Chapter X is analogous to that of Christ in Chapter I. It will be recalled that the seer declares in his foreword that the message is communicated to him BY Christ THROUGH His Angel. Throughout the course of his visions it is Christ Who at one time speaks, at another, the seer gets his message from the Angel. Throughout the Book the same significance is attached to "Jesus Christ" and "His Angel."

The "Little Book":—In the hand of this "strong angel" is a "little book opened," and He declares that there will be no longer delay; but when the seventh angel sounds "the mystery of God will be finished, as He gave the joyful message to His servants, the prophets." What is this consummation but the Incarnation, the description of which is given in Chapter XII? Surely this was "the joyful message of the prophets." This was God's method of making known to us the mystery of His Will to sum up all things in Christ. (Eph. i: 9, 10.) The Incarnation was the first step in the work of Atonement through which the "mystery" of God could be revealed; namely, "that the Gentiles are joint-heirs, and members of the same body, and joint partakers with us of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel." (Eph. iii: 6.) To other generations this was not made known. It was a "mystery," but now the "strong angel" declares that in the days of the seventh trumpet this "mys-

tery" will be "finished," that is, consummated and revealed. "Confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness; who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, appeared to angels, preached among Gentiles, believed on in the world, taken up in glory." (I Tim. iii: 16.)

The mystery of God is the plan of redemption, and we cannot but believe, though we are anticipating somewhat, that from the beginning of Chapter VIII to the end of Chapter XI, we have a spectacular description of the history of Israel from the deliverance from Egypt to the birth of Christ, a history of the great conflict between Good and Evil from the viewpoint of the plan of redemption.

Unrevealed Mysteries:—The seer says that when the "strong angel" cried with a great voice "the seven thunders* uttered their voices," and that he was about to write, but he heard a voice out of heaven saying, "Seal up the things which the seven thunders spoke, and write them not." There are some things God reveals to His prophets which He does not reveal to others. It is enough that John know them for the present. Besides, what the thunders uttered does not concern the immediate present but the indefinite future. To Daniel it was said, "Shut up the words, and seal the book, to the time of the end." (Dan. xii: 4.) The events which the "book" recorded would not transpire in Daniel's time, hence the instruction to seal it up. John, however, is elsewhere commanded otherwise, "Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is at hand." (Rev. xxii: 10.) Comparing these two statements with the one under

*The "seven thunders" are a personification of the "seven voices" of thunder, which the Jews were wont to speak of, this usage being founded on the seven-fold repetition of "the voice of the Lord" in Psa. 29. The statement here implies that the seven spirits of thunder uttered their voices together.

consideration, it is obviously intended to teach the importance of that to be disclosed "in the days of the voice of the seventh angel." What the seven thunders spoke applied to the future, this is immediate. In vision the seer is on the other side of the Incarnation, and the importance of this transaction overshadows all else. There may be some connection, too, between that which John is commanded to seal up and the office of Christ as Revealer of God's Mysteries. John is commanded not to write it, for "He Who is in the bosom of the Father" is about to come and "declare Him." (John i: 18.) The "little book" is "open" in contrast with the "sealed roll" of Chapter V. The contents of the seventh Trumpet must have some bearing on this fact. When the seventh angel sounds, "then is the mystery of God finished," i. e., the scheme of Redemption is no longer a mystery. (See Eph. ii: 9, 10.) God's purpose may now be read like an "open book." This has been made possible through the Incarnation and all that it involved. The only logical answer that can be given to the question—What is the "little book"? is that it represents the gospel of the Son of God.

The Seer's New Commission:—The same Voice commands the seer to approach the "strong angel" and request the "little book." The angel commands him to eat it up, declaring "it will make thy belly bitter, but in thy mouth it will be as sweet as honey." This experience must be explained by the renewal of the seer's commission, "Thou must again prophesy of many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings." The whole transaction is directly related to his further activity. Even though "the mystery of God is finished" in the Incarnation, the service of God's messengers is by no means completed. This incident is in the nature of a second call.

At this point the narrative reflects John's actual experience as an Apostle and Prophet of the Lord Jesus Christ. We see here the transition from the old Covenant to the new. Old Testament prophecy ended with the Incarnation; this is also the starting-point for New Testament prophecy. The "mystery of God" was "finished" when that event took place, but it has been given to the Church to make known to men "the manifold wisdom of God" as expressed in the mission of Christ. Here then the apostle symbolically describes his inaugural experience, dating his commission to "prophecy" from his call by Christ. (John i: 39, 40; Matt. iv: 21 and synoptic parallels.)

Meaning of Symbol. 1. Disability Removed:—Up to this point he has merely written what he has seen and heard; he has been an amanuensis writing at the dictation of Another, so to speak. He has been mostly concerned with past history. From now on almost to the end of the Book he will describe features of this spiritual conflict in which he has had a leading part. The narrative here is evidently based on Ezek. ii: 8-iii: 3, and reflects the experience of several of the Old Testament prophets. Two things are suggested by this strange symbol. In the first place it denotes the removal of the inward disability felt by every man who receives a call to the prophetic office. In Isaiah's case it was "unclean lips" that hindered, and he found cleansing by the live coal from the altar. Jeremiah had a profound sense of weakness and inexperience, he felt no more capable than a child to grapple with the problems confronting a prophet in his day; yet this disability is removed by the consecrating Hand of God on his lips. (Jer. i: 9.) Ezekiel's experience is similar to John's, and it is not easy in their cases to determine the exact nature of the incapacity of which they were sensible. But all the above-men-

tioned had to deal with their rebellious countrymen, and they feared lest there should still be lurking in them the same spirit that characterized those to whom they were sent to preach, and were loath to look upon themselves as being in any degree better than they.

The angel's command is a test of the seer's obedience and he eats up the "little book" in spite of its contents and the declaration of the angel regarding its effects. "When the book proves sweet to the taste, he has the assurance that he has been endowed with such sympathy with the thoughts of God that things which to the natural mind are unwelcome become the source of spiritual satisfaction." This was the experience also of both Jeremiah and Ezekiel (Jer. xv: 16; Ezek. iii: 3) with which John was familiar; and in a still higher degree in Christ, to Whom the doing of the Father's Will was meat and drink, and Who experienced a joy in it that was peculiarly His own.

Meaning of Symbol. 2. Inspiration Imparted:— The second thing denoted by this symbol is the bestowal of the gift of inspiration on him now called to the prophetic office; i. e., the power to speak the message of Christ. "And He said to me, take and eat it up. * * * And I took the little book * * * and ate it up. * * * And they say to me, Thou must again prophesy of many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings."

Meaning of Symbol. 3. Practical Suggestions:— These are the chief ideas involved in this symbol,—cleansing and inspiration. There are, however, some minor suggestions that may be worth noting. It should teach us, for example, that it is only transmuted truth we are capable of proclaiming, that truth, to be effective, must be "adorned" (Tit. ii: 10); and, to be understood by ourselves, must enter into our

experience. The fact that the seer found this sweet-tasting book bitter after eating may suggest to us that the reception of the Divine message is pleasant and agreeable, but the delivery thereof to others often accompanied by hardships and bitterness. This was certainly true of the seer himself. It also corresponds with Paul's experience. He told the Philippians that his highest ambition was to know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings (Phil. iii: 10). To the Colossians he could say that his ambition had been realized. "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for you," etc. (Col. i: 24). This statement contains a profound philosophy. It teaches unity of travail among the various members of the mystical Body of Christ—the Church. Both John and Paul simply mean that the suffering they endure in their Master's work is only their allotted share as members of the Body of Christ.

Stripped of their mystical terminology the plain meaning of John's description of his experience, which we are now considering, and of Paul's expression which we have quoted above is, that the only truth we really possess is that which has filtered through our brains into our hearts. The Bible speaks to us in the language with which we are most familiar—the language of the heart.

The Apostate Church:—That we have not overstated the significance of this symbol may be proved by a glance at the opening verses of Chapter XI. The seer is given a reed and told to measure the Temple and the altar, and "those who worship therein." But the court which is without the Temple he is to "leave out,"—literally, "cast out"; being the word used relative to the casting out of the man born blind, which incident is recorded in John's Gospel ix. Here we have to do with the

apostate Jewish Church. In addition to what the "little book" meant to John personally, it contained judgments about to descend on this Church that had disowned her Lord. But "those who worship therein" are to be exempt. They constitute the real Temple, the faithful remnant. The seer's symbolical experience of "eating" the little book, resulting in the "bitterness" spoken of (the seer's language denotes the Scriptural view of the seat of the emotions), was typical of the struggle WITHIN the fold of God's people and describes the actual experience of the apostles with their former co-religionists. Wherever they went this apostate element opposed them until Paul finally said to the Jews of Antioch in Pisidia, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you, but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." This was but the fulfillment of the warning and prediction uttered by Christ Himself to His blundering countrymen. "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. xxi: 43).

God's Plan of World-Redemption:—It is this we find reflected in what was told the Seer after he had eaten the book. "Thou must again prophesy of many peoples and nations, and tongues, and kings." It shows how God was preparing the way for the admission of the Gentiles into His Kingdom. The natural branches of the olive tree were cut off and, keeping to Paul's figure, strange ones grafted in their place. (Rom. xi: 24.) The "forty-two months," during which "the court which is without the temple * * * was given to the Gentiles" must be interpreted on the principle we have applied to other notes of time in

the course of these visions. The time thus indicated is to be figuratively understood. It is the half of SEVEN years and symbolizes a broken whole. It suggests that the Gentile sovereignty is not absolute. This fact justifies the distinction drawn between the "temple of God" and "the court which is without the temple." The interests of the faithful are not jeopardized by this impending calamity.

The Two Witnesses:—The same thought is involved in the length of time the "two witnesses" are to prophesy. Who are these? There are many opinions and it would only be confusing to present such an array. The seer defines them as "the two olive trees and the two lamp-stands, which stand before the Lord of the earth." In the vision of Zechariah, upon which this vision in the Revelation is based, two olive-trees supplied the golden lamp-stand of the Temple with oil. (Zech. iv: 11-14.) Here, however, there are TWO lamp-stands, a license which John has taken to complete the correspondence. What do these two olive-trees and the two lamp-stands represent? The golden lamp-stand of the Temple with its seven burners typified Israel's religious mission to the world. The Law and the Prophets were the sources of the nation's inspiration. We do not hesitate to express our belief that the seer is here depicting the ministry of the Law and the Prophets. The judgments he describes are echoes of the experiences of Moses and Elijah, the respective embodiments of these sources of inspiration. The aim is to show how the revelation of God in the Law and the Prophets was disregarded by the apostate children of Israel, the "thousand two hundred and sixty days" expressing, as already indicated, the same thought as that embraced in the "forty-two months." That is, the Law and the Prophets have a limited ministry.

But let us look a little more closely into the details in order to substantiate our assertion: "And if any one wishes to hurt them, fire goes forth out of their mouth, and devours their enemies." We are in harmony with the author's plan as seen in these studies thus far, when we say that this is simply an echo of Elijah's experience recorded in II Kings i, where the various captains of fifty are sent by King Ahaziah to apprehend him. The "authority to shut heaven that it rain not" clearly refers to Elijah's part in the great drought and consequent famine in the reign of Ahab. (I Kings xvii.) And what can be clearer than that the authority to turn waters to blood, "and to smite the earth with every plague," reflects Moses' experience with the Egyptians regarding the Ten Plagues?

"If any shall wish to hurt them he must in this manner be killed," and not until they have "finished their testimony" are these witnesses vanquished by "the beast that comes up out of the abyss," that evil genius of the apostate coreligionists who are in league with the world.

Evidently an advance is to be made in the world by the Kingdom of God. The Law and the Prophets are about to complete their mission. It may be necessary here to again remind ourselves that the seer's present view-point is anterior to the Incarnation.

Another mark of identity is given us by the seer. "Their carcass is on the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord also was crucified." There is no mistaking Jerusalem here, and we can hardly fail to see that he is depicting under the guise of these figures the witness borne by the Law and the Prophets, and by Christ Who was the fulfiller of both and Who was crucified by His enemies.

Beast of the Abyss:—"The beast that comes up out of the abyss" making war with these "two witnesses," overcoming them, is none other than the "star fallen out of the heaven," "the angel of the abyss" of Chapter IX, that is, Satan.

The coming of this beast from the abyss is twice mentioned, here and in xvii: 8. The Hebrews conceived the Universe as consisting of four regions, namely, heaven, earth, sea and abyss. Satan first appears in heaven as the opponent of Christ. (xii: 1-5.) He has attempted from the very beginning to frustrate the Incarnation. This is further exemplified in the "enmity" manifested between "the seed of the woman" and the "serpent." (Gen. iii: 15.) We may trace this "enmity" beginning with the first murder (Gen. iv), which our Lord ascribes to Satan (John viii: 44), and continuing throughout the history of the Jewish nation. After the nation had been formed, the forces of the Adversary were directed against the royal House of David. The revolt of the Ten Tribes may be regarded as another step. Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahab (II Chron. xviii: 1-3) resulted in three generations of the royal family of Judah being cut off, until the line of "the seed of the woman" hung on one infant less than a year old, namely, Joash (II Chron. xxii: 11). Athaliah thought she had destroyed all the seed-royal, but this one infant was saved from her fury by his father's sister. Thus the Messianic line was preserved.

In order to complete this history it will be necessary to anticipate somewhat the teaching of later chapters, but to leave it at this point would give the reader a very inadequate conception of a struggle that occupies so important a place in the remaining chapters of the Revelation. This "beast out of the abyss" meets us in various forms in later studies, and it were

well to have a connected outline of his activities at the outset. Passing then into the New Testament, we might cite the instance of the putting to death of all male infants of two years and under by Herod at the time of Christ's birth; the attempt of the people of Nazareth to throw Christ headlong from the hill on which their city was built (Luke iv: 28-30), and the storm on the sea of Galilee when He rebuked the wind and waves that threatened to engulf the craft. The struggle ended at Calvary with what result it is not necessary here to amplify. Suffice it that we bear in mind the pictorial representation of it in Gen. iii: 15.

Satan's attempt to frustrate the Incarnation having failed, his opposition is transferred to the regions of the sea and the earth (xii: 12; xiii: 1, 11), and the enmity of the beast from the sea begins with xiii: 1. But he is subsequently to emerge from the abyss as the enemy of the Church, as he emerged from the sea (xx: 3, 7). It is then by this beast from the abyss that the "witnesses" are said to be put to death. They are, however, to make head against all opposition until their testimony be finished. There can be little doubt that the basis of the events described here is the crucifixion of Christ and its attendant occurrences. John was a witness of that transaction and recalls the joy with which the enemies of Christ regarded His demise, and how it looked for the time being as if the forces of evil had triumphed. But their joy was of short duration, for in "three days and a half the breath of life from God entered into them, and they stood on their feet * * * and they heard a great voice out of heaven, saying to them, Come up hither."

The earthquake and the giving of glory to the God of heaven recall the scenes following the supernatural portents attending the crucifixion.

The Ascension:—In the ascension of the "two witnesses" the seer is thinking of the end of Moses and Elijah, one of whom died in the fulness of his powers whose sepulchre was never known, and the other translated that he should not see death. But in addition to this and overlapping it is the thought of Christ's resurrection and ascension. These three histories are closely connected in the seer's description, and the apparent discrepancy between this account and the actual end of Moses and Elijah should not perturb us. This is symbolism, and it is more important, because true to principle, that every feature contribute to the symmetry of the picture than that the details should conform to literal fact. We have already seen that he has taken license with the Temple lamp-stand; shall he not also have the same liberty in his treatment of other matters? The ultimate application, however, is to the experience of Christ Who fulfilled the Law and the Prophets. In the feasting that followed the death of the witnesses we mark a peculiarity of the author to caricature. In Chapter VII we read how the redeemed celebrated the feast of Tabernacles. In this chapter, while we do not have the outward tokens of that feast reproduced, it is safe to say that this account of the merry-making of the enemies of righteousness is intended as a caricature of that celebration.

Grand Finale:—"The second woe is passed, behold, the third one comes quickly." When the seventh angel sounds, then comes the grand finale. Voices in heaven are saying, "The kingdom of the world has become our Lord's and His Christ's, and He will reign forever and ever."

When Satan and evil men thought they had thwarted the Divine purpose and were no longer under the dominion of God's law, the Lord shows

that the victory is His. The final move is made by which the world becomes His again, so to say, and righteousness becomes predominant. That final move is the Incarnation with all its consequent eventualities, the description of which occupies the next chapter.

Anachronisms Explained:—It may seem strange that the author should first depict the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, and then immediately follow with an account of His birth. We must not look for chronological sequence in the Revelation. When the author begins a new phase of his subject he follows it to the end without regard to the chronological setting of related subjects. This may lay him open to the charge of anachronism, but he consistently refuses to treat of anything else that may fall within that particular period which he may at the time be describing. We have sufficient evidence of this in the contents of Chapters VI-VII, describing the whole conflict of which the Book treats. Then in Chapter VIII another phase of it is taken up and carried on to a point of triumph, which of course must necessarily include the ministry and death of our Lord, with His resurrection.

But the Incarnation is so important an event in this moral conflict that the author must treat it separately as marking the crisis of that conflict. This makes up the content of the seventh trumpet and shows the connection between the closing part of Chapter XI and the contents of Chapter XII, but before we proceed further it might be well at this point to briefly recapitulate.

Recapitulation:—One great difficulty that has stood in the way of a proper understanding of the Book of Revelation, is the fact that all who have

tried to explain it, so far as we know, have restricted its scope, most of them to the period between the establishment of the Church and the final consummation; others, to the first century of the Christian era, the latter indeed, in short, claiming that its interest centres wholly in the fall of Jerusalem and the effect of that event upon spiritual religion. There is truth in both views, but neither goes far enough. We cannot doubt that the fall of Jerusalem is the chief historical fact around which the contents of the Book revolve, and that its prophetic aspect reaches to the end of time, but we will miss the key to a true understanding of the Revelation if we fail to see that it carries us back to the beginning of human history.

All are agreed that the Revelation is a pictorial and symbolical representation of the struggle between the Church and the world, these terms representing contrary principles at war with each other. The age-long mistake has been that, when speaking of the Church, men almost invariably mean the New Testament Church exclusively. But we have no right to restrict the Church to any particular age. We are well aware that "Church" in the commonly accepted sense of the term is a New Testament conception, but the principle involved is as old as humanity. That is to say, the author of the Revelation has in mind the people of God in all ages. It will therefore be understood that we use the term in its broadest sense, and that the theme of the Book is the perennial struggle between righteousness and unrighteousness. We accordingly, at the risk of prolixity, give a brief analysis of the portion already considered, so that the reader may not be lost as in a maze.

The first five chapters are preparatory to the account of the actual struggle.

Chapter VI contains a brief history of the whole conflict viewed in its effects on the enemies of God.

Chapter VII gives the result from the view-point of God's people.

Chapters VIII-XI, inclusive, set forth the history of this conflict as seen in its relation to Israel, leading up to the great crisis in the struggle; namely, the Advent of Jesus Christ.

Our analysis refutes the charge often brought against the Book that it has no definite plan or order of sequence. We assert on the contrary that it has a very definite and skilfully arranged plan, to which the part we have already considered is a sufficient testimony.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WORD MADE FLESH.—CRISIS OF THE BATTLE.

REVELATION xii.

And a great sign was seen in heaven; a woman arrayed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars; and she was with child; and she crieth out, travelling in birth, and in pain to be delivered. And there was seen another sign in heaven; and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads seven diadems. And his tail draweth the third part of the stars

of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was about to be delivered, that when she was delivered, he might devour her child. And she was delivered of a son, a man child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and unto his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that there they may nourish her a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels going forth to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels; and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him. And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying, Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accuseth them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe for the earth and for the sea: because the devil is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time.

And when the dragon saw that he was cast down to the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And there were given to the woman the two wings of the

great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness unto her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth after the woman water as a river, that he might cause her to be carried away by the stream. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon waxed wroth with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus.

Those who limit the scope of the Revelation hardly know what to say about the place occupied by this chapter. They must resort to the inference that there is very little plan in the Book. But if the reader has followed us attentively, he doubtless has seen that such an inference is unwarranted. We have constantly discouraged every tendency to look for chronological sequence here. Also where literalness might be implied we have endeavored to call the reader's attention to the general scope and purpose of the Book. But though we deprecate the general predilection for chronological sequence, it is very plain to us that we have at this point a striking example of LOGICAL sequence. This is not an isolated event that is related in this twelfth chapter. It is the main issue of the Trumpets. It is an affair anticipated and hailed with delight by the people of God as represented by the twenty-four elders. The transition from the previous chapter should not cause us to miss a single link in this chain of visions.

In order that we may clearly see the place occu-

pied by the contents of this vision, it is necessary to refer to what was said concerning the significance of the seventh seal of viii: 1. There we expressed the opinion that this seal contained the concentrated effects of the six preceding seals, and that the seven trumpets were evolved from the final seal. It is likewise very plain to us that the seventh trumpet sums up all the force of the six preceding ones, and that the event pictured here, instead of being isolated and independent, represents the contents of the seventh trumpet of the previous chapter. That which leads expositors to conceive a break between Chapters XI and XII, is their interpretation of the pæan of praise acclaimed at the sounding of the seventh trumpet. The fulfillment of the words, "The kingdom of the world is become our Lord's" (xi: 15), they place forward at the end of the present dispensation. But may it not be conceivable that this truth was realized when our Saviour "finished" His work by His death on the Cross, and His resurrection? Did not the kingdoms of the world become His then? Was He not justified in saying at that time, "All power is given unto Me"? (Matt. xxviii: 18.) We verily believe that if it were ever given to angels or to any of the redeemed to acclaim that joyful event, it was when our Saviour arose triumphant over Death. No! that happy occasion does not await the future. It has come to pass, and the disciples of the Master have ever since been persuading men who are in rebellion against Divine authority "to lay down their arms."

Neither should we stumble over the statement about "the time of the dead to be judged," etc. (xi: 18.) In John's conception, as this is portrayed in his Gospel, the Judgment is continuous: men are

judged here and now. They do not wait until the "Resurrection." (Cf. Matt. xxii: 27.) Their attitude toward Christ here determines their future status, which the Final Judgment confirms. Those who are opposed to Christ's rule cannot be regarded as respected foes, inasmuch as Christ has conquered the world. They are rebels, and instant submission to His authority is demanded. (See note on xx: 11-15, where the author of the Apocalypse has expanded this idea.) Besides, events requiring centuries for their fulfillment pass in a moment through the prophetic mind, so that in almost the same breath he may be speaking of events with centuries intervening. Thus the destruction of Jerusalem, a disaster immediately related to the rejection of Christ by the Jews and which is primarily intended in this account, serves as a prophecy of the greater Judgment. To the seer the work of Christ was the climax of this great contest. (John xii: 31, 32.) To his mind all further efforts of the forces of evil were but the death spasms of a beaten enemy. Nor must we forget that the contents of all these visions are but "things which must shortly come to pass" (i-1), and that the whole period in which this transaction takes place is regarded as "a little time." (vi: 11.) The seer was a man of great faith, a splendid optimist, and describes ideal conditions as if they were actually present.

The Incarnation Symbolized:—We are now prepared to examine the contents of this twelfth chapter in which we have a pictorial representation of the Incarnation. That it is a sign seen in "heaven" must not disconcert us. "Heaven" in this Book evidently does not always refer to the abode of God and the home of the blessed. That it certainly does not con-

vey that meaning in this connection is evident from the statement that the Child is "caught up to God" (v: 5), that is, caught up from the earth. It does not here even denote a place, but rather a condition, an attitude. What John means is, this is a spiritual sign; that is, he saw in spirit, it is a vision. To be "in the spirit" and to be in "heaven" are the same.

The "woman" represents the Church of the time in which this event takes place, and for the sake of clearness we may speak of this as the Old Testament Church. Her identity is given in the sixth verse where the "thousand two hundred and sixty days" have the same meaning as the three and a half years' ministry of the "two witnesses." She is "clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars." The Seer doubtless has in mind the dream of Joseph in which the sun and moon represent his father and mother and the eleven stars his brothers. (See Gen. xxxix: 9, 10.) And as Jacob and Rachel are the traditional ancestors of the Israelites, it is not difficult to see the meaning here. The "woman" and her adornments represent respectively the earthly and heavenly aspects of the Old Testament Church.

The Dragon:—The apostle saw "another sign" at this time; "a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems." This is a representation of Satan, the heads and horns denoting his universal activity and power (v: 9). "The third part of the stars of heaven" refers to the angels whom Satan drew down with himself to perdition. (See Jude 6.) No definite number, but a large portion is meant.

The Supreme Crisis:—When the "woman" brought forth her Child, the "dragon" stood prepared to devour it. But this "man-child" Who is to shepherd all

nations is caught up to God. This transaction marks the supreme crisis in this age-long struggle, and the issue of it shortens the rule of Satan. Cf. Gen. iv: 1, where Eve when she "bore Cain" supposed that she had "gotten a man from the Lord"—"a man-child" who was to bruise the serpent's head.

The attitude of the "dragon" toward the "woman" expresses the seer's idea of the demon world in Christ's day. There is no way to account for so much demoniacal possession as recorded in the Gospels and Acts, except on the ground symbolically set forth here. A great advance is made in the Kingdom of God by the Advent of Christ, and Satan strives to counteract it ("And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bring forth, that when she brought forth, he might devour her child," v: 4), and this increased activity in the kingdom of evil expressed the demonic consciousness of the gravity of the situation. It proved to be the beginning of the end of Satan's rule.

The "woman" fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, "that they may nourish her there a thousand two hundred and sixty days." There is no attempt on the part of the seer to dogmatize. Let us bear in mind that this is picture-language with all the appurtenances peculiar to the Oriental mind. He is picturing the most critical stage in the struggle between Righteousness and Evil for the mastery of the world. The "wilderness" is the scene of her temptation as it was of Christ's. She flees to the place of her conflict "prepared of God," and where she is nourished. (Cf. "angels ministered unto Him," Matt. iv: 11.) Deut. viii: 2-5 and Hos. ii: 14 recall the flight of the ancient Church when persecuted by the Dragon through Pharaoh. The "harlot" is afterward found in a wilderness (xvii: 3), but not in "a place

prepared of God." The "wilderness" is in prophetic language the type of Israel's exile. (Isa. xli: 17-19; Jer. ii: 2; Ezek. xx: 13; Hos. ii: 14, 15.) The "flight" suggests the passage of the Gospel to the Gentiles as announced in Matt. viii: 11, 12; xxi: 43; Acts xiii: 46, 47; xxviii: 28. The "woman" is the Church of that time, which of course stands for Righteousness. The "Child," who is Christ, is represented as the product of Righteousness, and comes forth as its Champion in the conflict. There is not a word here about the work of Christ on the earth. This is not the seer's object. He merely wishes to show how Satan is foiled, that the Child Who is to shepherd all nations is caught up to God. The whole vision may be regarded as a spectacular description of the Birth of Christ and its accompanying incidents. The action of "the dragon" as depicted here was doubtless suggested by the attempt of Herod to get possession of the Child Jesus, while in the escape of the "woman" to the wilderness we see a reflection of the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt.

The Issue:—The issue of this crisis is shown in the expulsion of Satan and his host from "heaven." Care must be taken not to literalize here. It is the seer's way of expressing the result of the struggle.

Through the victory of Christ and His followers, Satan's days are numbered, "the Devil is gone down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has but a little season." (v: 12.)

This is not an anachronism; it is not meant that this is the introduction of evil into the world. But the seer transfers the contest from the first Adam to the second Adam, and shows how the latter bruised the serpent's head. (Gen. iii: 15.) This was Satan's real downfall, and the spectacular expulsion from heaven follows as a logical consequence. The men-

tion in this connection of the expulsion of the "dragon" from heaven by Michael, in a war which had for its object the dispossession of God, leaves us to infer that the triumph of Christ was the fundamental victory over evil. The seer reverts to the earlier incident that we may know the antecedent history of the Dragon, and that he may explain the circumstances under which he was led to persecute the Woman. This history is traced down in verse 14 to the same point as in verse 6, i. e., to the escape of the Woman into the wilderness. Stripped of its graphic verbiage, the language here teaches that the old conflict of Satan with the powers of heaven was renewed at the Incarnation, and with the same result. The Devil and his angels not only failed to conquer, but they could not maintain their place in heaven. This is the "destroying the works of the devil" (I John iii: 8), which was the consequence of the triumphant life, and death, and ascension of Christ. Here, indeed, is described in its fullest significance that which Christ with prophetic eye beheld. (Luke x: 18.) Cf. also, "Now shall the Prince of this world be cast out." (John xii: 31.)

Opposing Factors:—"For this cause rejoice ye heavens and ye who dwell in them." "Woe to the earth and sea." The "heavens" are contrasted with the "earth and the sea." Joy to the one; to the others, woe! It is not the places that are thought of so much as what these places represent—the religious and the irreligious. All three figuratively describe the opposing factors in this spiritual conflict. The "heavens" stand for the forces of righteousness and the place of the Church's security, whence the warfare is directed on her behalf. While the "saints" are, in reality, on the earth they are not regarded in the visions of this Book as dwelling here. They "tabernacle" with God

in "heaven" (xiii: 6). This much at least is implied here. The term, however, has larger meanings, which must be determined by their immediate connections. In most cases reference is made to the sky in the popular sense, while in others the term is expressive of the Seer's spiritual perception, being analogous to "in the Spirit." (Cf. i: 10; iv: 1; and xii: 1.) The "earth" and the "sea" denote the forces of evil and the abode of those who oppose God's true people. An amplification of the meaning of these terms must, however, be reserved for the next chapter in connection with the history of the two Beasts that arise out of these elements.

The Persecuted Church:—The defeat of the "dragon" is followed by his persecution of the "woman." He "cast out of his mouth a flood of water to engulf her, but the earth swallowed it up," after which he makes war on "the rest of her seed." Here John doubtless recognizes the new Church and the persecution that followed the success of the apostles' preaching. The statement concerning the further activity of the "dragon" must not be lost sight of in the exposition of the succeeding chapters. Every opponent of God and His people described in the progress of the remaining chapters is an agent of Satan. This will be clearly seen when we reach Chapter XX. But this much by way of anticipation.

This completes the second great cycle in the apostle's portrayal of the spiritual conflict. We have now considered the Universal and National, or Redemptive aspects; the third cycle having to do with the immediate conditions surrounding John and his fellow-religionists.

PART IV.

Local or Contemporary Aspect of the Conflict.
(xiii: 1; xx: 6.)

CHAPTER XII.

THE FORCES OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.

Revelation xiii.

* * * and he stood upon the sand
of the sea.

And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads as though it had been smitten unto death; and his death-stroke was healed: and the whole earth wondered after the beast; and they worshipped the dragon, because he gave his authority unto the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? and who is able to war with him? and there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and there was given to him authority to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth for blasphemies against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, even them that dwell in the heaven. And it was

given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and there was given to him authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, every one whose name hath not been written in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the world. If any man hath an ear, let him hear. If any man is for captivity, into captivity he goeth: if any man shall kill with the sword, with the sword must he be killed. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like unto a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the authority of the first beast in his sight. And he maketh the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose death-stroke was healed. And he doeth great signs, that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men. And he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs which it was given him to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, who hath the stroke of the sword, and lived. And it was given unto him to give breath to it, even to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as should not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the bond, that there be given them a mark on their right

hand, or upon their forehead; and that no man should be able to buy or to sell, save he that hath the mark, even the name of the beast or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. He that hath understanding, let him count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man: and his number is Six hundred and sixty and six.

Universal Principles Locally Applied:—We have now reached the fourth grand division of the Book. Up to this point the Seer has described the universal and national aspects of the conflict. His treatment of the great theme has been general. He now deals with that feature of it which directly concerns his readers. The universal principles are applied to local conditions. The author's high order of skill is displayed in the ease with which the transition is made from one phase to the other. Therefore, what was once the history of a world struggle henceforth becomes the history of the Christian Church of John's day, in its conflict with the enemies of righteousness.

The Dramatis Personae of Evil:—In Chapter XII was depicted the enmity of the dragon toward the Woman. Failing in his original design he resolves to make war with "the rest of her seed," i. e., the Christian Church. For this purpose xiii:1 represents him as standing on "the sand of the sea." The two "beasts" of this chapter embody the respective elements whence they come, the sea and earth. They are figurative of all that oppose God in His work for righteousness. But each is a distinct factor in this contest. We must remember John's experience in order to get his point of view. He was persecuted by both the Roman and the Jewish authorities. This was true of all who believed with him (i: 9; ii: 9, 10). The first "beast" came up out of the sea, having ten

horns and seven heads like the "dragon" whose agent he is. To this beast the dragon gives his "power, and his throne, and great authority." This is doubtless the reason why the Seer speaks of the "horns" as diademed, instead of the "heads" as in the description of the dragon in Chapter XII. This seven-headed beast is the chief point of connection between the Apocalypse and the Book of Daniel. (Cf. Dan. vii.)

Characteristics of First Beast:—The "sea" implies universality. It is an element that washes every shore, and here represents in a general way the extent of Satan's dominion, for we believe that the aim of the Seer is to show the source of the beast's inspiration, the sea being the abode of the dragon, which is Satan. The Seer, however, but hints at this now. The detailed explanation he leaves to a later chapter. We need only say here, accordingly, that all the features of this beast mentioned here point to Rome as she is known in history. Like that Empire, this beast has the swiftness of a "leopard," the strength of a "bear," and the prowess of a "lion." John also saw that one of the beast's heads was "wounded unto death," which was afterward healed, with the result that the world "wondered." The explanation of this phenomenon we must defer until we have traversed the history of the enemies of God's people. We may say at this point, however, that because of the "slaughtered head" the beast becomes an object of worship with the godless world. This feature gives him an outward resemblance to the "slaughtered Lamb." (See Chapter V.) A fuller description of this beast we reserve until we arrive at Chapter XVII, where the Seer reaches a climax in his delineation of the Church's enemies.

The "forty-two months" during which he is to hold sway doubtless point to a limited time. Its mention

here was intended to console the persecuted Church that this condition of things would not last indefinitely. As in the case of the half-hour's silence in heaven mentioned in viii: 1 which we explained as a broken whole, so here. Seven means completeness, perfection. Forty-two months are three and a half years, or the half of seven years; thus the thought of incompleteness or imperfection. All definite periods of time mentioned in the Revelation may be interpreted on the same principle. But it is not so easy to explain why the same length of time is in other instances divided into larger or smaller periods. For example, the Gentiles are to tread down the holy city (xi: 2), and authority given to the beast (xiii: 5), "forty-two months"; while the "two witnesses" are to prophesy "1260 days" (xi: 3), and their dead bodies to lie in the street "three and a half days" (xi: 9). The "Woman" is nourished in the wilderness "1260 days" (xii: 6) or "time, and times, and half a time" (xii: 14). No satisfactory explanation of this peculiarity has yet been offered.

The Seer interjects a comment here. The people of God are being banished and killed. These iniquities will rebound upon the perpetrators. With what measure they mete it shall be measured also to them (Matt. vii: 2). "If any one is for captivity, into captivity *he* goes; if any one shall kill with the sword, with the sword *he* must be killed." Here is room for the display of "patience" and "faith" on the part of the saints.

Characteristics of Second Beast:—The second beast comes up out of the "earth" having two horns like a lamb, but speaking like a dragon. Throughout this section the Divine Persons and acts are frequently caricatured. The evil cause has its "lamb" as well as that of the principle opposed to it. But there could

be no mistaking the hypocrisy. He looked like a "lamb," but spoke and acted like a "dragon," exercising all the authority of the first beast, who is Satan's vicegerent. We make no mistake in identifying this "lamb" with Judaism as the early Church knew it not only, but as it is seen throughout the whole course of its history with the exception of a comparatively few shining examples who gave it lustre. The "earth" must be regarded as the abode of those "whose names are not written in the book of life," who worship the beast that comes up out of the sea. Therefore the judgments descend on the "earth" (viii: 5 and xvi: 1); under the Seals on a fourth part, under the Trumpets on a third part, and under the Bowls on all created things.

The powers of this second beast are analogous to those of the two Witnesses of Chapter XI. In bringing fire from heaven to earth, he was doing the very thing Christ forbade if attempted in the literal sense.

There is considerable point to this when we remember that the author of the Apocalypse himself once wished to exercise this power. The mention of this characteristic of the beast is an indication of the Seer's present consciousness that the rebuke which Christ administered to him on that occasion has had its intended effect and the lesson been well learned. (See Luke ix: 54.) He also compels all "who dwell on the earth to worship the first beast, whose death-stroke was healed." This whole description corresponds with the frequent apostasy of the Jewish nation in the matter of Baal-worship and the spirit of idolatry that so grievously afflicted it. This obliges us to regard the first beast as embodying a collective, not an individual, history. But more of this when we reach the full description of these two enemies. Both empires, therefore, the political and the religious, are

opposed to God's true people. It would seem as if the two beasts with the dragon formed a hellish contrast to the Divine Trinity of i: 4-6.

Historical Basis of Their Collusion:—Here is introduced an element of fusion between two factions that have nothing in common and secretly hate each other. There is an instance recorded in the Synoptic Gospels where the Pharisees and the Herodians dropped their differences for the time in order to crush an "enemy" equally obnoxious to both. (Matt. xxii: 15-22 and parallels.) We do not doubt that this incident served as the immediate background for this feature of the vision. Christ said that His followers would be treated as He was, and perhaps the incongruous collusion between the Pharisees and the Herodians was a grim prophecy of what awaited His Church on a larger and perpetual scale.

"Mark" of the Beast:—All who will not worship the image of this seven-headed beast are put to death or otherwise discriminated against, no one being able to buy or sell but he that had the "mark, the name of the beast, or the number of his name." Bringing the interpretation down to the seer's own day we would say that Judaism would exalt Rome in order to persuade that power to do for it its dastardly work, because it was, itself, too weak to crush the "heresy" within its own borders. This "mark" is a caricature of the "seal" on the foreheads of the redeemed (Ch. VII), a badge in contrast to the "sign upon thine hand" and the "memorial between thine eyes" given to the people of God (Exodus xiii: 9; Deut. vi: 8; xi: 18). Constituents on both sides now have their mark of identity. This is a sublime touch. The children of God can be distinguished from the children of

the Evil One (Matt. xiii: Parable of Tares). The worshiper becomes like the object of worship (Psalm cxv: 8). The "image and superscription" we bear tell whose we are. Sin leaves its "mark" on the countenance of the evil-doer. Daniel Webster once said, in addressing a jury, "Crime is its own detective." Sin will find the sinner out. (Num. xxxii: 23.) It carries the principle of its own manifestation. It has a transforming power. It will dismantle the most superb and promising intellect, unbalance the keenest judgment, enfeeble the best memory, paralyze the strongest will, corrupt the purest imagination. On the other hand, the children of God reflect their Father's glory. "We with unveiled face reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord" (II Cor. iii: 18).

His "Name" and "Number":—The closing words of Chapter XIII have been very perplexing to many people, and various attempts have been made to fix upon some historical personage, whose career would to a certain extent fit the description of the first beast. It is needless to say that all such attempts have failed, and must necessarily fail. If sufficient attention had been paid to the many analogies of the Book, such useless pursuits would have been avoided. We have purposely called attention to the various travesties on the Divine Persons and acts displayed by the powers of evil in these visions—oftener, indeed, than may be deemed necessary—in order that the reader may avoid the many fallacies into which numberless students of the Book of Revelation have been led. Let us bear in mind that there are three things that must be distinguished here. Whether they are three different things, or that all three terms refer to the one

thing, is nothing to the point under consideration. What the "mark" signifies, we have already seen. The "name" can be known only by those who worship the "beast." In this they are like the righteous, whose "new name" none but themselves can understand. (ii: 17.) The interpretation here turns on the meaning of the "NUMBER," not on the "name" nor the "mark" of the beast.

To Jewish readers the "number" would be very significant. Seven was the number of perfection. Eight, like the "great day" of the Feast which fell on the eighth, or the Resurrection on the first day after the seven preceding days, signified a new beginning. But six fell short of perfection, and the repeating number as in this instance, "666" only intensified the conviction that the claims of the "beast" were pretentious. He had deceived men, but not God, Who had taken His correct measure. "He that has understanding" will not be deceived by his great pomp and the signs wrought by him. His power is but human, his "number" is but that of a "man" and not a god, and to trust him is to return to the "shadow of Egypt." (Isa. xxx: 2.)

This was full of meaning to the first readers of this Book. The seer evidently hopes, judging by the phrase with which he introduces this bit of information, to encourage his fellow-believers to continue in their fortitude. "Here is wisdom." The beast will soon be "weighed in the balance and found wanting." (Dan. v: 27.) He will fall short of his purpose. His "number" spells failure. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, for the time of your redemption draweth nigh." (I Cor. xv: 58; Luke xxi: 28.)

CHAPTER XIII.

CONTEMPORARY CHURCH VIEWED
IDEALLY.

Revelation xiv.

And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on the mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and the voice which I heard was as the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sing as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders: and no man could learn the song save the hundred and forty and four thousand, even they that had been purchased out of the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were purchased from among men, to be the first fruits unto God and unto the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no lie: they are without blemish.

And I saw another angel flying in mid heaven, having an eternal gospel to proclaim unto them that dwell on the earth, and unto every nation and tribe and tongue and people: and he saith with a great voice, Fear God, and give him glory; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters.

And another, a second angel, followed, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, which hath made all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a great voice, If any man worshipeth the beast and his image, and receiveth a mark on his forehead, or upon his hand, he also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is prepared unmixed in the cup of his anger; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day and night, they that worship the beast and his image, and whoso receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints, they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

And I heard a voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them.

And I saw, and behold, a white cloud; and on the cloud I saw one sitting like unto a son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the temple, crying with a great voice to him that sat on the cloud, Send forth thy sickle, and reap: for the hour to reap is come; for the harvest of the earth is over-ripe. And he that sat on the cloud cast his sickle upon the earth; and the earth was reaped.

And another angel came out from the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

And another angel came out from the altar, he that hath power over fire; and he called with a great voice to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Send forth thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel cast his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vintage of the earth, and cast it into the winepress, the great winepress, of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and there came out blood from the winepress, even unto the bridles of the horses, as far as a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

Teaching of the Vision:—This vision of the Lamb with a hundred and forty-four thousand is just what we should expect after the word of encouragement which closes the last chapter. It is intended as a consolation to those who are suffering for their faith. It is not simply a repetition of the vision of Chapter VII. There must be some more cogent reason for the representation of a like number. We explain it as expressing different aspects of the theme of the Revelation, the same principle governing both. We are just now studying universal principles applied to local conditions, and it is only natural that the figures of speech and the symbols used in the universal features of this great conflict, should also be used to enforce the Seer's meaning in the present local aspect. While the vision of Chapter VII describes the redeemed of all nations at the end of the age, this vision may be regarded as an ideal representation of the Christian Church of John's day. The number of those who are with the Lamb has the same significance here that it has in the former vision. It is expressive of completeness. The universal proportions of the earlier vision will help us in our interpretation

of the present vision. The arrangement of Chapters XIII and XIV is exactly similar to that of Chapters VI and VII. As in the universal aspect we view the result of the contest upon both the wicked and the righteous, so also in the local features we are shown the contrast between the followers of the beast and the followers of the Lamb. As in the earlier vision, the phraseology here is distinctively Hebrew. The redeemed number "144,000," they are on "Mount Zion," and they are a "first fruits to God and to the Lamb." The arguments that were used in the interpretation of the former section might very well be used here also. The universal character of the Book's theme precludes an explanation along racial lines. Latitude is the essential thing in the interpretation of this phraseology. All national distinctions are lost in the unique relationship of Christians to each other and to Christ. Yet the Seer undoubtedly had a purpose in using Hebrew phraseology as a vehicle of universal truth. The primacy of Israel with regard to the order in which the gospel should be heard by the nations of the world was never absent for any length of time from his mind. We must, therefore, take into consideration the local conditions and the questions that would be raised regarding the ancient religion. The local churches with which John was familiar, and which looked to him for guidance, contained many converts from the ancient faith who were by no means ready as yet to let go entirely of the religion of their fathers. The fate of Judaism was clearer to the Seer than to any of those for whom his words were primarily intended. The fact that this incident follows so quickly upon the vision of the horned lamb that spake like a dragon, makes it extremely probable that these two features are mutually related.

Marks of Indentity:—Involved in this general explanation therefore is the answer to that question that must have been often asked in the Seer's day, What of the future of Judaism and the Temple? The Book of Acts and Paul's Letter to the Galatians show the tenacity with which many of the converted Jews clung to the old rites and customs. The Apostles themselves had to exercise considerable tact in dealing with their former co-religionists and observe feasts and rites (Acts xvi: 3, and xxi: 20-26), in which they no longer had any personal interest, lest they wound the susceptibilities of brethren who had not yet entirely released their hold on the ancient religion. Consequently, "Mount Zion" is the heavenly Jerusalem contrasted with "Babylon" (verse 8) the earthly. The "hundred and forty-four thousand" include the Jews who have embraced the Christian religion. The answer to the above question is that the true and faithful Israelites are merged in the Christian Church, while the apostate must suffer the consequences of their rejection of Christ and their attachment to the beast. Thus Judaism passes away.

The Gospel's Appeal:—After this, the apostle saw "another angel flying in mid-heaven having the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on the earth," i. e., the followers of the beast. Included among these are, of course, the misled Jews. Another opportunity is mercifully given them. Once more are they appealed to, to turn from the wrath about to descend on them and their city. They are under the influence of the dragon, and when they have abetted him to accomplish his purpose he will turn and rend them. The "eternal gospel" is the gospel which they have all along rejected, the gospel which Christ proclaimed, the gospel which Paul and John had preached to them, "eternal" because God's Lamb had been

"slain from the foundation of the world" (xiii: 8), because it existed in the Heart of God before the world was made (Eph. i : 4, etc.), "eternal" because it never can be superseded by any other gospel, and because Christ is the finality of Faith. (Jude 3.) Instead of worshiping the beast they are enjoined to "give glory to God because the hour of His judgment is come." This is a plain statement as to what the gospel comprises. Surely its proclamation involves the function of warning. There is a "wrath to come." It has many harbingers. For one of these the "hour" was about to strike. The impending destruction of Jerusalem was the great catastrophe that was the immediate incentive to the writing of the Revelation.

"Babylon":—Another, a second, angel announces the fall of "Babylon." That this is Jerusalem we need not question. The Seer is in keeping with the symbolic principle that has governed him throughout, when he refrains from giving the Capital city of Judea its proper name. In Chapter XI he called it Sodom and Egypt, but left no doubt as to its identity by adding that it was the city where "the Lord was crucified." As these were names applied to it "spiritually" (xi: 8), we need not hesitate to accept the evident logic of the case that here also he refers to Jerusalem. If further proof were necessary, we have it in the avowed cause of the city's fall—she "made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." Throughout the Old Testament, fornication is spoken of in the sense of religious unfaithfulness. Of no city but Jerusalem would the prophets speak thus. Other cities and states were denounced because of their sins, in plain terms; but the figure of fornication or adultery was applied only to the city that had been betrothed to God. No details of this "fall" are given at present. The Seer merely touches on the subject here to return

to it in climactic force in the judgments of the Bowls in Chapter XVI. That this is characteristic of John's method was pointed out in Chapter VIII.

Wind and Whirlwind:—A third angel threatens all who worship the beast with the "cup of wrath." The severity of this language should not perturb us. It is not directed toward those who are sick of sin, and who, seeing the "error of their ways" desire to change the mode of their lives, but toward those who pose as leaders in religion; in short, those who have become apostate to the religion of the prophets. They sowed the wind and have veritably reaped the whirlwind. (Hos. viii: 7.)

In Chapter XIII we saw that the second "beast," which represents Judaism, compelled all to worship the image of the FIRST beast, no one being able to buy or sell but those who had the mark on the right hand or forehead. Here we are shown the results of the oppression of the "beast having two horns like a lamb." Its sin proved to be a boomerang. Thus is rewarded "the patience of the saints." They have "seen their desire on their enemies."

Contrasted Issues:—Then a voice from heaven is heard saying, "Write, Happy are the dead who die in the Lord, henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, for their works follow them." These will be dying for the Faith and will receive the blessing of God. Those who persist in worshiping the beast will experience eternal "death." The issues of these different attitudes are contrasted here. Those who worship the beast suffer the "wrath of God"; they have no "rest" day or night. The martyrs to the faith "rest" from their labors. Here the seer presents the attitude of the Jews toward the gospel, as in Chapter XI he describes their attitude toward the Law and the Prophets.

Anticipatory Judgment of "Babylon," or Jerusalem:—Next John saw a white cloud and on it sat one like "a son of man" with a golden crown and a sharp sickle. An angel comes out of the Temple, i. e., from the very presence of God, and hence his authority to direct the Son to cast His sickle and reap. "Another angel came forth out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle." Then an angel comes out from the altar "having authority over fire." He calls to the angel with the sickle to reap the grapes and cast them into the "winepress of the wrath of God" situated outside the city.

This is a double rendering of the same truth. The "son of man" is in reality the Judge, but the actual work of administering punishment is represented as being wrought by the angel. Though the "son of man" and the "angel" are differentiated in the narrative, we should not separate them in our thought.

This account bears the same relation to the dignity of Christ as the whole of the Revelation. This, it will be recalled, as we are told in the very first words of the Book, was signified to John through Christ's Angel. What this "angel" said or did must be associated in our minds with nothing other than that CHRIST said or did it. As in the Old Testament we read that Jehovah sent His Angel to administer His decrees, so here in the Revelation Christ is represented as having his mandates executed through His Angel. Hence this two-fold description. It is a highly-colored reflection of Isaiah lxiii: 1-6.

To what does it refer? Wrested from its connection, the first impression it gives is that it is a strikingly realistic account of the Last Judgment. But if our analysis of the Book is correct, it cannot be so regarded. Placed as it is between the rise of the second "beast" in Chapter XIII, and the destruction of

what that beast represents as recorded in Chapter XVII, it is necessary to confine this judgment to Jerusalem. This interpretation receives strong confirmation in the fact that it is the "earth" that is reaped. Bearing in mind that the two-horned beast came up out of the "earth" while the seven-headed beast arose out of the sea, a figure of the nations generally, we cannot resist the conclusion that this judgment is restricted to Judaism; and is a spectacular prediction of the impending fall of the "city" (verse 20). The same truth is repeated in another form in xvi: 1, where the seven angels are directed to "pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God into the earth." The detailed action of each angel is but the fulfilment of this general order. Thus already we have a hint that the last series of judgments primarily concerns Jerusalem. To refer to the illustration already used, the Seer like the musician has again made prominent his theme as he leads on to the grand climax. So in Chapter XIV we have visions both of the redeemed contemporaneous with John, and of the fate of the persistently apostate.

CHAPTER XIV.

HARBINGERS OF JUDGMENT.

Revelation xv-xvi.

And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having seven plagues, which are the last, for in them is finished the wrath of God.

And I saw as it were a glassy sea mingled with fire; and them that come victorious from the beast, and from his image, and from the number of his name, standing by the glassy sea, having harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are thy ways, thou King of the ages. Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy; for all the nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy righteous acts have been made manifest.

And after these things I saw, and the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: and there came out from the temple the seven angels that had the seven plagues, arrayed with precious stone, pure and bright, and girt about their breasts with golden girdles. And one of the four living creatures gave unto the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and none was able to enter

into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished.

And I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, Go ye, and pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God into the earth.

And the first went, and poured out his bowl into the earth; and it became a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and which worshipped his image.

And the second poured out his bowl into the sea; and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living soul died, even the things that were in the sea.

And the third poured out his bowl into the rivers and the fountains of the waters; and it became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters saying, Righteous art thou, which art and which wast, thou Holy One, because thou didst thus judge: for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and blood hast thou given them to drink: they are worthy. And I heard the altar saying, Yea, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.

And the fourth poured out his bowl upon the sun; and it was given unto it to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat: and they blasphemed the name of the God which hath the power over these plagues; and they repented not to give him glory.

And the fifth poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast; and his kingdom was darkened; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they repented not of their works.

And the sixth poured out his bowl upon the great river, the river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way might be made ready for the kings that come from the sunrising. And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, as it were frogs: for they are spirits of devils, working signs; which go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. (Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.) And they gathered them together into the place which is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon.

And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air; and there came forth a great voice out of the temple, from the throne, saying, It is done: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since there were men upon the earth, so great an earthquake, so mighty. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And great hail, every stone about the weight of a talent, cometh down out of heaven upon men: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof is exceeding great.

It is very evident that we are drawing to a climax.

The apostle sees a "sign * * * great and marvelous,

seven angels having seven plagues, which are the last, for in them is finished the wrath of God."

The Victors:—Standing by a glassy sea mingled with fire are those who "come victorious from the beast." They sing the "song of Moses * * * and the song of the Lamb." This is a point not to be overlooked, for the fact that they sing the "song of Moses" as well as that of the "Lamb" is a mark of identity. Evidently the redeemed of this vision are the same as those of Chapter XIV, namely, Jewish and Gentile Christians contemporaneous with the seer. Thus in Christ, "there is neither Jew nor Greek * * * for all are one." (Gal. iii: 28.)

The reference to "fire" in the "glassy sea" may be explained as representing the trials through which they passed. In iv: 6 it is a sea, as it were, "of glass" only. Now, of "fire" also. There, the basis of the vision doubtless was the Temple laver; here, apparently, the suggestion comes from the narrative of Israel's escape from Egyptian bondage, Pharaoh being regarded as the Dragon's agent. The "sea of glass mingled with fire" reflects the thought of the Red Sea, "which appears on fire as the Sun of Righteousness arises upon it, on the margin of which the true Israelites sing the song of Moses and of the saving Lamb." Standing on its shores are seen those who are delivered from the beast's sway as the Israelites were, in their exodus from the land of Pharaoh.

It will be noticed that the contemporary aspect of this struggle is described along the lines of the main theme of the Book. In the GENERAL features before we meet the actual clash, so to speak, of the contending parties we are directed to the Church in its heavenly character (Chapter V). In the course of the conflict mention is made of martyrs, the "souls under the altar" (Chapter VI). So in the description of the

LOCAL features of the struggle we meet with the ideal representation of the Church in John's day (Chapter XIV), while in the section we are considering we are introduced to those who suffered death, or persecution under other forms, for their principles.

The Angels of the Plagues:—The seven angels next come out of the Temple and receive the bowls containing the plagues. The angels are "girded about the breasts with golden girdles." In the description of the "Son of Man, in Chapter I we noticed that this was a mark of priestly prerogative. The statement following that of the angels receiving the bowls is significant. We are told that "the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God * * * and that no one was able to enter into the Temple until the seven plagues * * * should be finished."

Rather than anticipate what will later be made plainer, we prefer to ask the reader to bear this last quotation in mind until we reach the end of the Plagues.

A "great voice" directs these angels to "pour the seven bowls of the wrath of God into the earth." The pouring of these plagues continues throughout Chapter XVI. It will be noticed that all these are reflections of the past history of God's dealings with the enemies of His people, particularly the Egyptians and the Philistines.

This Book recognizes the struggle for supremacy between Good and Evil in the time it was written, as a part of the AGE-LONG battle. John and his contemporaries were simply doing what noble souls in every generation have been obliged to do. Righteousness is an exotic; it is not "native to the soil"; and it is only by constant care and attention that it can thrive. Therefore, the continual reference in the Revelation to the transactions of former ages need not surprise

us if we bear this fact in mind. Those events serve as a background for a representation of the struggle in every age.

The Seven Plagues:—The first angel poured out his bowl "into the earth" with the result that a "noisome and grievous sore" came upon those who worshipped the image of the beast.

The second poured his "into the sea," the waters of which became blood, killing the denizens of the deep. A third angel pours out his bowl "into the rivers and fountains," which were turned into blood. This brings from "the angel of the waters" an exclamation of praise to "the Righteous and Holy One." Those who worshipped the beast had "poured out the blood of saints and prophets," and now God had "given them blood to drink." The "altar" representing the sacrifice of the saints adds its "Amen, Even so" to what the angel of the waters had said. There is a close connection between the statements of the "angel of the waters" and the "altar." The latter signifies the slaughter of saints and prophets, and both rejoice in the judgment upon their murderers.

The fourth angel poured out his bowl "on the sun," which scorched men with fire, but they repented not. The fifth bowl is poured out "on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened, and they gnawed their tongues for pain and blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores; and they repented not of their works." (Cf. xi: 13.)

The sixth bowl prepares us for the climax contained in the seventh. It is poured out "upon the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, that the way of the kings, who come from the rising of the sun, might be prepared." This description is regarded by some as having been borrowed from the capture of Babylon by Cyrus, who effected his con-

quest by diverting the waters of the Euphrates. The imagery also suggests the passage of the Red Sea or the Jordan as the historical basis of the vision. Rationalistic interpreters here drag in a reputed legend said to be in vogue in the author's day to the effect that Nero would return from the dead and lead a host of Parthians to sack Rome. This legend arose from a rumor that gained credence that he was not really dead, but had fled to the East, whence he would return and seek vengeance on Rome. The rumor later ripened into a belief in his resurrection for the above stated purpose. This, they say, is the meaning of the words, "And one of his heads (i. e. the beasts) was wounded unto death, and his death-stroke was healed" (xiii: 3). But is it probable that the author would make use of such a story and place any credence whatever in it, in view of his statement in the beginning concerning the significance of his message and his credentials? We cannot believe it and we do not think this is the meaning of his statement concerning the expedition from the East. We believe that the "kings" referred to in the sixth bowl have to do with the several expeditions from Assyria and Babylonia to Palestine. Israel's experience with the great Eastern Powers is referred to in this place to prepare us for the account of Jerusalem's fall in A. D. 70.

False Prophet Identified:—"Three unclean spirits like frogs" come out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast and the "false prophet," which latter is another title for the second "beast" of Chapter XIII. This new title confirms the opinion expressed at that point, that this beast represented the religious power, viz.: Judaism. "And he does great signs, so that he makes fire even come down out of heaven on the earth in the sight of men" (xiii: 13). Compare this statement with xi: 5, where Elijah as the representative of

the "Prophets" is depicted as calling down fire from heaven. This certainly marks the identity of the FALSE prophet. The second beast and the false prophet are one and the same. The false prophet travesties the true to gain a following.

These frogs are "spirits of demons, working signs, which go forth upon the kings of the whole habitable earth, to gather them to the battle of the great day of God, the Almighty." This "battle" is named Har-magedon, from Megiddo, made famous from the defeat of Josiah. But the place is mentioned here not solely because of that unhappy event, but because of an earlier victory of the kings of Canaan. (II Kings xxiii: 29; II Chron. xxxv: 22; Zech. xii: 11; Jud. v: 19.)

The prophetic principle is maintained here, but the method of application is reversed for an obvious reason. The universal element is mentioned first, in order that the primary features of this judgment may be elaborated.

Nature of the Conflict Determines Author's Method:—Before reference is made to the remaining bowl, it may be necessary to say that as with the Seals and Trumpets, we must not look for any historical verification of the judgment of the bowls. This is not history but symbolism. The whole series is an intensified description of what occurred in the history of ancient Israel, but here everything has been portrayed on the most general lines. It may be asked why the seer should describe *imaginary* scenes, why, if this is not historical, should he have attempted any description? The answer lies in the character of the warfare he is depicting. It is a conflict of *spiritual* forces, and, that his readers may understand, he describes it in terms of the tangible. Before the seventh angel pours out his bowl, the Lord speaks. "Behold,

I come as a thief." When this was poured out "on the air" a great voice out of the Temple from the Throne said, "It is done."

Anticipations of Christ's Second Coming:— Throughout the Apocalypse we are constantly reminded that the matter with which it deals issues in the final Coming of Christ. To four out of "the seven Churches of Asia" Christ threatens to come in judgment, while in the epistle to Loadicea He is "at the door." (See Chapters II and III.) All the judgments described in this Book have some bearing on that event, while the author distinctly informs us that these plagues "are the last"; they belong to the time of the End. They accordingly fall not on the *fourth* part of the earth as under the Seals, nor on the *third* part as under the Trumpets, but on *all* created things, as if the events of the preceding visions are in these taken up and completed. Thus in vi: 17 we read of the End, in xi: 18 we are told that the judgment of the dead is come, and in xvi: 17 that "it is done." The second, third and sixth Bowls are analogous with the second, third, and sixth Trumpets, the seventh Bowl being parallel to the sixth Seal. But he who does not see that this ultimate event is heralded by many harbingers is blind, indeed. (See end of Chapter II.) This vision of the plagues has an immediate and a future application. The immediate reference is to the judgment of the Jewish nation in the destruction of Jerusalem, but room is left in the account for a wider reach of thought. Indeed, so clearly is the city's fall the burden of the apostle's mind, that the narrative from this on to the end of Chapter XIX is devoted to it in its several phases. A consideration of the details will be left to later chapters. Meanwhile, it is only necessary to remind the reader of what has been said concerning the relation of this last plague to the six

preceding ones, and the relation of the series of Bowls to the Trumpets and Seals. (See in Chapter IX.) That the seventh bowl is climactic in its importance as well as in its chronological order, is manifest in its effects, and by the words introducing the series, "Which are the last, because in them is finished the wrath of God" (Chapter xv: 1). Thus we may picture these series of judgments which together form the core of the Book, as a great banyan tree, the seventh Seal being the branch giving root to the Trumpets, the seventh of which in turn gives root to the series of Bowls.

Similarity of Judgments:—The striking similarity between them, especially the Trumpets and Bowls, is worthy of consideration. Several writers regard this as illustrating the principle of "Recapitulation" first suggested by Mede. On this principle they account for the three-fold description of world judgments, by regarding the Seal as the emblem of an event still secret but decreed by God, the Trumpet sounded as manifesting the will that the Divine decree should be speedily accomplished; and the poured-out Bowl as the symbol of that decree identified with its execution. It is to be noticed that they are not continuous but resumptive. There could be no object in this repetition except that set forth in this work, namely, that the author begins his subject in its widest outlook and narrows it down to his own times.

Reiteration:—To make our meaning clear, we venture to reiterate. The Seals, Trumpets, and Bowls represent three climactic events in the world's history. The book with the seven seals naturally suggests the history of the world symbolically set forth, the mysteries of which remain with Christ, Who alone can open it. The description of the sixth seal leaves no doubt that in the mind of the author it depicts the Last Judgment. The first six seals cover the whole gamut

of human history. The seventh seal is the connecting link between what has already been described and that which is to follow, thus giving the reader a hint that as the author has swept the widest circle possible, he is now going to deal with events that lie nearer his own time. We thus begin to see his purpose. The last trumpet has as its object the delineation of the Incarnation, and as this with its concomitants, the Crucifixion and Ascension, fills up the Divine purpose as regards specifically the Hebrew people, we may correctly infer that the series of Trumpets sets forth the National or Redemptive aspect of the author's theme. Once more the circle is narrowed. The remaining series, namely, the Bowls, climactically considered, has reference to the impending fall of Jerusalem. Hence we have called this the local aspect. We must not be understood, however, as excluding even from this series the ultimate application to be made of all the judgments described in the Revelation. (See Chapter VII.) So that in the setting of the three series of judgments we have an inverted parallelism; the one line of thought beginning at the farthest reaches, namely, the Final Judgment and ending with the local judgment, the destruction of Jerusalem; the other beginning at this point and involving the prophecy of the Final Judgment.

Priesthood of Believers:—The meaning of xv: 8 may now be plainer. "No one was able to enter into the Temple until the seven plagues should be finished." The Temple stood for an idea. While it was in existence, (at least this was true until Christ's completed work) the priesthood was restrictive. The rending of the veil at the time of the Crucifixion symbolized the removal of every restriction toward a larger priesthood—the priesthood of all believers. Now, there-

fore, that the seven plagues are "finished," and finished with them Judaism as a force, we, as believers in Christ, are permitted to minister in the priests' office. (See on i: 6 in Chapter II.)

CHAPTER XV.

JUDGMENT OF THE HARLOT.

Revelation xvii-xviii.

And there came one of the seven angels that had the seven bowls, and spake with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the judgment of the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters; with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and they that dwell in the earth were made drunken with the wine of her fornication. And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness: and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations, even the unclean things of her fornication, and upon her forehead a name written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of the Harlots and of the Abominations of the Earth. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I wondered with a great wonder. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou

wonder? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and the ten horns. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and is about to come up out of the abyss, and to go into perdition. And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, they whose name hath not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast, how that he was, and is not, and shall come. Here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth: and they are seven kings; the five are fallen, the one is, the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a little while. And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven; and he goeth into perdition. And the ten horns that thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but they receive authority as kings, with the beast, for one hour. These have one mind, and they give their power and authority unto the beast. These shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they also shall overcome that are with him, called and chosen and faithful. And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the harlot sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. And the ten horns which thou sawest, and the beast, these shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and shall burn her utterly with fire. For God did put in their hearts to do his mind, and to come to one mind, and to give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God should be accom-

plished. And the woman whom thou sawest is the great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

After these things I saw another angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried with a mighty voice, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, and is become a habitation of devils, and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird. For by the wine of wrath of her fornication all the nations are fallen; and the kings of the earth committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth waxed rich by the power of her wantonness.

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come forth, my people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues: for her sins have reached even unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Render unto her even as she rendered, and double unto her the double according to her works: in the cup which she mingled, mingle unto her double. How much soever she glorified herself, and waxed wanton, so much give her of torment and mourning: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall in no wise see mourning. Therefore in one day shall her plagues come, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God which judged her. And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and lived wantonly with her, shall weep and wail over her, when they look upon the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon,

the strong city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, for no man buyeth their merchandise any more; merchandise of gold and silver and precious stone, and pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet; and all thyine wood, and every vessel of ivory, and every vessel made of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble; and cinnamon, and spice, and incense, and ointment, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and cattle, and sheep; and merchandise of horses and chariots and slaves; and souls of men. And the fruits which thy soul lusted after are gone from thee, and all things that were dainty and sumptuous are perished from thee, and men shall find them no more at all. The merchants of these things, who were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning; saying, Woe, woe, the great city, she that was arrayed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearl! for in one hour so great riches is made desolate. And every shipmaster, and every one that saileth any whither, and mariners, and as many as gain their living by sea, stood afar off, and cried out as they looked upon the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like the great city? And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and mourning, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, wherein were made rich all that had their ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate. Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye saints, and ye apostles, and ye prophets; for God hath judged your judgment on her.

And a strong angel took up a stone as it were a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with a mighty fall shall Babylon, the great city, be cast down, and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers and minstrels and flute-players and trumpeters shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft, shall be found any more at all in thee; and the voice of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; and the light of a lamp shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee; for thy merchants were the princes of the earth; for with thy sorcery were all the nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth.

Issue of the Plagues Amplified:—The climax, to which we referred in the beginning of the last chapter as approaching, has been reached in the last or seventh bowl. But the matter is so important that the general reference to it among other things at the close of Chapter XVI does not suffice. This one event is singled out from among the others, and the seer devotes these two chapters exclusively to its consideration.

John is taken by one of the angels that poured out the Bowls to be shown the judgment of the great harlot "that sits on many waters." What he sees is "a woman sitting on a scarlet beast." The beast had seven heads and ten horns, the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and on her forehead a name written, "Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of the Harlots and of the Abominations of the Earth."

Relation of Chapters XIII and XVII:—We are prepared to maintain that these two creatures are

exaggerated representations of the two beasts of Chapter XIII. The precedence of the heads of this beast over the horns, in contradistinction from the order of Chapter XIII, is determined by the seer's viewpoint. There, it will be remembered, John saw it rising out of the sea, and, of course, it was the horns of the beast that would appear first. But here he sees it in the "wilderness," and he accordingly gives the order of nature.

Two-Horned Beast and Woman:—But why in the case of the second beast of Chapter XIII, should there be a transformation to a "woman" in Chapter XVII? The answer lies in the peculiar position which Jerusalem held in the realm of religion. Her disloyalty to Jehovah is spoken of in terms of a faithless wife. She had had many "lovers." The word "harlot" is used at least fifty times to describe her spiritual fornication, i. e., the corrupt doctrine and practice of Israel and Judah. Such is its import in eighteen places out of twenty-one where the figure occurs. It is the prophetic emblem of God's people who had forsaken Him. In three places only is the word applied to heathen cities, namely, Isa. xxiii: 15, 16, to Tyre; Nahum iii: 4, to Nineveh. In order to emphasize this truth, it was necessary to describe Judaism in this way, for in the seer's thought Jerusalem and Judaism are interchangeable terms.

Identification of "Woman and Beast":—We are not left in the dark as to the identity of these creatures. "The woman which thou sawest is the great city which has a kingdom over the kings of the earth" (xvii: 18). No other city than Jerusalem could be spoken of as "drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (xvii: 6). "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and to go into per-

dition. And they will wonder who dwell on the earth * * * when they see the beast, that he was and is not, and shall come."

In Chapter XIII this same beast is spoken of as having one of his heads wounded unto death, and that the deadly wound was healed. It should be noted that in each instance the "wonder" arises in contemplation of his revived state. This beast, which represents the world-power, at this time centred in Rome, is not a single entity, but the collective force of the world-spirit in general. This will be clearer as we proceed. "The seven heads are seven mountains." They are also "seven kings, the five are fallen, the one is, the other is not yet come." These seven mountains or kings are the manifestations of the beast (which, it must be remembered, is Satan's vicegerent) in successive eras of oppression suffered by the people of God. Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, and Greece are the first five. Rome is the sixth, and it "is" in John's day. The seventh will come when the Roman Empire has disintegrated. The "ten horns, which are ten kings," are another designation for the seventh head (xvii: 12, 13). They are the various forces of evil manifested throughout the Christian era. Their antitypes are seen in the nations that subverted the Western Empire and settled on its territory, followed nearly one thousand years later by the capture of Constantinople by Mohammed II and the establishment of the Turkish Empire in Europe, in which event we see the dissolution of Rome's Eastern Empire.

"And the beast that was, and is not, he also is an eighth, and is of the seven, and goes into perdition." The "beast" is not acting for himself, but for another. This other is Satan, who is the "eighth." This will be seen more clearly when we reach Chapter XX, where the Apostle's explanation leaves no doubt

respecting the identity of these evil powers.

This much we venture to express as the immediate teaching at this point. But there are also broader outlines of truth here. To present these it will be necessary once more to call attention to John's method of developing the various features of his thesis. This we have likened to the musician who recurs again and again to his theme, gradually working to a grand climax.

This method we find in the seer's description of the forces of evil. The first embodiment of the evil Principle is met in the "beast that comes up out of the abyss" (xi: 7), which is the same as the "star fallen out of heaven" (ix: 1), and the "angel of the abyss" (ix: 11), its chief manifestation being the "dragon" which attempts to "devour the man-child" (xii). Failing in his attempt, "he went away to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." The "woman" and "the rest of her seed" we have explained as the Church of the Old and New Testaments respectively.

We see nothing more of the "dragon" as such. Henceforth the warfare is carried on by means of secondary agencies.

But that he is the inspirer of all the activities of the powers of evil we are assured.

The next manifestation of the "dragon" is that of a beast rising out of the sea, to whom he gives his authority, but that his is the master hand is evidenced by the fact that he is worshiped because he gave his authority to the beast (xiii: 4). The immediate agent at that time was Rome. Between this "beast" which represents Rome and the second "beast" representing Judaism, there is collusion. In Chapter xvii these evil principles are brought to a climax. Therefore in the

interpretation of this chapter we must not lose sight of the "dragon." It is for him that this "beast" with the seven heads and ten horns acts. And we are not left in doubt respecting the identity of the "dragon." "And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan" (xii: 9). Satan is the genus; the "dragon" and the two "beasts" the species.

The meaning, then, is that Satan has had his representatives in the powers Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, and the "ten horns" which occupy the place of the seventh head. We must give to the number seven in this instance, also, the same significance attached to it in the rest of the Book. The "seven heads" are but the one head. In short, what we have here is a compendious history of Satan. Now perhaps we are able to understand the statement concerning the first beast of Chapter XIII, which is the same as that of Chapter XVII, to the effect that "one of his heads was smitten to death. And his death-stroke was healed."

The "Deadly Wound" Recurrent:—This is equivalent to the statement of xvii: 8, "that he was, and is not, and shall come." The latter helps to explain the former.

We must not try to conceive of a beast with seven heads at one time. This description merely represents the collective power of the enemy of righteousness. The "deadly wound" was not a single but a recurrent experience. Reference is made to the successive rise and fall of each of the powers mentioned above. What made the people "wonder" was that another should rise upon the ruins of the fallen empire. Egypt flourished and decayed, the beast "was, and is not" to use the Scripture expression; but the powers of evil were later concentrated in Assyria and the rest, each of

which had the same experience. In the fall of each empire "one of his (the beast's) heads was as it were smitten to death" and in the rise of its successor "his death-stroke was healed" (xiii: 3). Here again is another instance of the principle for which we have contended, namely, that the theme of the Revelation covers the whole range of the Kingdom of God.

As in most of the seer's predictions, there is a PARTICULAR as well as a general application here. We believe that John is speaking primarily of Jerusalem and Rome as he knew them. He wished to set forth Rome's perfidy as the fruit of Jerusalem's compromise. The latter stood for the spiritual, and her fate is an eternal warning as to what they who are guilty of this wrong may expect.

Rome's Perfidy:—"The beast was, is not, and shall come." We have considered this statement in its widest reach. But there is also a practical lesson here. A little reflection will make it clear. Judaism and Rome were at one in the persecution of God's true people. It is well known that Rome catered to the prejudices of the Jews to keep them passive in their vassalage. She learned this only after bitter experience. In the beginning of Rome's domination, the Jews learned that "the beast was." Now, he acts as if he "is not." He has hoodwinked the "woman" into believing that her cause is his, and so she uses his great power to carry out her purposes. But his perfidy will soon be unmasked, and she shall learn that he is again "to come." Thus the "dragon," who is the moving spirit in all this transaction, makes the "woman" feel that she "sits as a queen." But the price she pays is her destruction.

The seer's mind doubtless reverts to the wicked partnership between the Roman power and a degener-

ate Judaism for the perpetration of the darkest deed in history.

They combined to "make war on the lamb," but the partnership did not last long. The destruction of Jerusalem came, which he next proceeds to describe.

This description is based on the narrative of Babylon's desolation (Isa. xiii: 19-22). It is significant that the city is "burned." Fornication was her crowning sin, and death by burning was the punishment prescribed for it under the Law of Moses. (Lev. xxi: 9.)

Chapter XVIII is occupied with a most graphic account of the way in which the fall of the city is viewed by the various classes who had their interests there; of the awe that came over them as they contemplated so complete a ruin.

We also have an echo of our Lord's words respecting the destruction of Jerusalem. (Matt. xxiv: 22.) The "elect" are thought of in the injunction, "Come out of her, My people." (verse 4.)

It is not within the scope of this work to explain every phrase of the Book, its aim being rather to set forth as clearly as possible its main outlines in an effort to interpret the seer's purpose. Further remarks on the description of "Babylon's" fall, therefore, would be superfluous and would only multiply these pages without throwing further light on the view of the Revelation which they set forth.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE TRIUMPH OF CHRIST; OR "MARRIAGE
OF THE LAMB."

Revelation xix: 1: xx: 6.

After these things I heard as it were a great voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, Hallelujah; Salvation, and glory, and power, belong to our God: for true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great harlot, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and he hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And a second time they say, Hallelujah. And her smoke goeth up for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God that sitteth on the throne, saying, Amen; Hallelujah. And a voice came forth from the throne, saying, Give praise to our God, all ye his servants, ye that fear him, the small and the great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth. Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are true words of God. And

I fell down before his feet to worship him. And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren that hold the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

And I saw the heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and he that sat thereon, called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. And his eyes are a flame of fire, and upon his head are many diadems; and he hath a name written, which no one knoweth but he himself. And he is arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood; and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure. And out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his garment and on his thigh a name written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in mid heaven, Come and be gathered together unto the great supper of God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses and of them that sit thereon, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, and small and great.

And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat upon the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him

the false prophet that wrought the signs in his sight, wherewith he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image: they twain were cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone: and the rest were killed with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, even the sword which came forth out of his mouth: and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and cast him into the abyss, and shut it, and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished: after this he must be loosed for a little time.

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: over these the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

A Two-Fold Joy:—Having described the judgment on "Babylon" and the "weeping and mourning" of those who had vested interests there, the seer proceeds to tell of the joy with which the news of her

destruction was received in "heaven." The reason for this rejoicing is two-fold. First, by common consent her judgment was just. The "harlot" was "drunken with the blood of the saints" (xvii: 6), and now her sins had returned on her own head. In the destruction of Jerusalem the defiant behest of the murderers of Jesus was abundantly answered. (Matt. xxvii: 25.) Then, Judaism's disintegration propitiated the "marriage of the Lamb." The Lamb and His Bride have their caricatures in the "lamb" of Chapter XIII and the "harlot" of Chapter XVII. The purity of the Bride is contrasted with the iniquities of the "harlot." That there be no misapprehension of his meaning, the seer declares that the "fine linen" she wears is the "righteous acts of the saints."

Judaism's Two Alternatives:—This description is very suggestive. While the true Bride has a rival the marriage cannot take place. The Bride is the Church of Christ, the "harlot" Judaism. The destruction of the latter as an organic force was absolutely essential, humanly speaking, to the success of Christianity. While Jerusalem and the Temple stood, Judaism was the rival of the gospel. It had but two alternatives—to be absorbed in the new movement, or altogether eliminated. As the Jews became bitter persecutors and regarded Christianity as a rival rather than the fulfilment of Judaism, they courted the calamity that overtook them.

Anticipations of Victory:—This section, therefore, marks a pause in the conflict, in order that the fall of "Babylon" be celebrated. In reality it is anticipatory of the double victory about to be won. It is the tendency of the seer to present the various shades of the picture he is describing, at different intervals. More than once "Babylon" has been described as already "fallen," but in reality this is an accomplished

fact only when the "beast" and the "false prophet" (the latter another title for "Babylon" and Judaism) are "cast alive into the lake of fire." (xix: 20.)

Now we see the significance of the appearance of Christ in this connection. We must bear in mind that the Apostle is still dwelling on the local aspect of the great conflict. The Champion of Righteousness comes forth followed by the armies of heaven to put an end to it.

The difference between the descriptions of Christ and those of His enemies should not be missed. There is not a suggestion of the grotesque about Him. When the "red dragon" appears, he has seven heads and ten horns, and on each head a diadem. (Ch. XII.) But Christ comes forth in regal dignity having on His Head MANY diadems showing his pre-eminence in all realms, and justifying His title of "King of kings and Lord of lords." This description is based on Psalm ii and Isaiah lxiii.

Climax of Struggle:—The climactic struggle, as seen from John's immediate view-point, is now about to take place. Arrayed against Christ and His people are the "beast" and "false prophet" with their followers. But so confident of victory are the forces of righteousness that an angel calls the carrion birds beforehand to the feast. The beast and false prophet are seized and "cast alive into the lake of fire, that burns with brimstone." Their followers are "killed with the sword of Him Who sat on the horse, which came forth out of his mouth." This last qualifying sentence ought to discourage every tendency to look for literalness here. It is not by the material sword that Christ conquers, but by His inherent authority to speak for, and as, God. He is the "Word of God" Who destroys His enemies by the "breath of his mouth." (II Thess. ii: 8.)

Respective Destinies:—True to his method, which has more than once been pointed out in these studies, this event the author describes in climactic force in the next chapter. In that connection, however, it is by "fire that came down out of heaven" that the worshipers of the beast are consumed (xx: 9), while almost in the next sentence their ultimate end is described in precisely the same terms as that of the beast and false prophet. There is no contradiction here. This is apocalyptic. It evinces the futility and hopelessness of every attempt at literal interpretation.

The beast and false prophet were cast alive into the lake of fire. The difference between these respective destinies as described in verses 20 and 21, is intended to teach that the beast and false prophet embody collectively the Evil PRINCIPLE. It was natural to speak of them as cast at once into the fire, for in Scripture usage this is the punishment meted out for persistent rebellion against God. In our thought, however, we must not attempt to distinguish between them and their followers. They are the leaders; they represent their followers. They act for them, and, therefore, we are to think of their fate as being that also of their followers. The language is consistent with the imagery of the Book.

The author, however, has made this verbal distinction in order that he might present the vision of the "great white throne" (xx: 11) and impress human beings with a sense of their accountability to God.

Passover of Judgment:—In the feast of the birds, the picture of Ezekiel xxxix: 17-20 is present to the Seer's mind. It offers a great contrast to the "marriage-supper of the Lamb." Milligan suggests that we also have here an "inverted and contorted Passover." On the cross Jesus was the Paschal Lamb. His enemies did not enter the Judgment Hall "lest they should

be defiled." (John xviii: 28.) They had not at that time eaten the Passover. In the tumult and excitement of that morning an opportunity had hardly presented itself. We are not told that they found one. Did they then lose their Passover? he asks. The Evangelist seems to say they found one, but a very different one from that prescribed by Law. Their cruel mockeries of the Lamb of God rebounded upon them with terrible force, taking the form of a pass-over of judgment. This is what we have reflected here.

"Thousand Years":—Next, an angel descends from heaven having the key of the abyss and with a chain binds Satan, sealing the abyss. Here he remains for a "thousand years." Satan is the "dragon" of Chapter XII. The "dragon" gave his power and authority to the first "beast" mentioned in Chapter XIII. Even the other "beast" of the same chapter that had two horns like a lamb, "spake as a dragon." The seven heads and ten horns of the first beast represent the different manifestations of Satan in his active opposition to the Kingdom of God.

Reference to a certain feature in the description of this beast will enable us to rightly interpret the thousand years. We realize that we are laying ourselves open to the charge of redundancy, but the current views in their number and variety are so mystifying, that we crave the reader's indulgence while we emphasize points already discussed. We do so because they have an important bearing on this section we are examining, and also because we hope that the fresh light given here will confirm the views already expressed. We are told in Chapter XIII, where this "beast" is first introduced, that one of his heads was "smitten to death, and his death-stroke was healed." We have explained this as meaning the successive rise

and fall of the great empires of antiquity. The "ten horns" ultimately take the place of the seventh head. Rome represented the sixth, and between its "deadly wound" and the appearance of the seventh head, the "beast" must be regarded as "not." (xvii: 8.) May not the "thousand years" be synonymous with "smit-ten to death"; or, to the statement that the "beast is not"? That is to say, to the period between the fall of the sixth head and the rise of the seventh.

If it be asked why this period be placed only between the sixth and seventh heads and not also between the other groups of two, the answer obviously lies in the importance which the author attaches to the times he is at present depicting. No such advance of the Kingdom of God had before been witnessed. Such days had, however, been predicted. (Cf. Joel ii: 28, 29, and Acts ii: 17, 18.)

Perhaps there is no feature of the Apocalypse that gives stronger evidence of the futility of all attempts at chronological arrangement and literal interpretation. While the beast with the seven heads typifies historical realities, yet in itself let it be remembered it is a poetic figure, a picture, and must be interpreted accordingly. Rome being the sixth head, let it be clearly understood that our reference to its "fall" is used not in the historical but in the prophetic or religious sense. The popular impression is that the Western Empire was extinguished in A. D. 476. The City of Rome was, it is true, taken by the Goths in that year, but the sovereignty of the Western Empire did not pass into their hands. This irruption but resulted in the reunion of East and West, the Roman Empire having been previously divided by the Emperor Diocletian of his own volition. (See Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, and Bryce's *Holy Roman Empire*.)

But there is a religious sense in which Rome fell when the conflict between Christianity and Paganism began. It is "prophetic" in the sense that it describes the view-point of the Biblical writers who have handled the subject. It is strikingly applicable to the present discussion. We have repeatedly pointed out that the Seer's aim is not historical accuracy. He has the eye of a prophet and notes results from the general drift of things; and when the tendency is noted he may speak of them as actually having come to pass. We have already said that in his view the work of Christ was the climax of all. (See Chapter XI.) All else could be measured according to this. When, therefore, he speaks of the appearance of a white horse whose Rider is named Faithful and True—the Word of God, Who "treads the winepress of the wrath of God" (xix: 11-16)—a pictorial representation of the ministry of Christ—he regards this as the very moment of the beast's end.

"Daniel's" Vision:—The teaching of this part of the Apocalypse is plainly based on "Daniel." In the second chapter of that Book is given a delineation of Nebuchadrezzar's strange dream. The king sees a great image with a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron, and feet part iron and part clay. A stone "cut out without hands" smites the image on its feet and grinds it to powder. The image in its various parts represents four kingdoms. The "stone" which smites it represents the Kingdom of Christ. In the seventh chapter, "Daniel" has a dream which corresponds with Nebuchadrezzar's. It is a vision of the four kingdoms—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome—but instead of an image composed of different metals, "Daniel" sees four beasts rise up out of the sea. The first was like a lion, the second like a bear, the third

like a leopard, while the fourth is not specified, though described as terrible and exceedingly strong, with great iron teeth.

Certain features in each of these beasts are particularized in the delineation. We are concerned only with the fourth beast. This was diverse from all the rest, having ten horns and iron teeth. "Daniel" considered the horns and saw coming up among them another little horn before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. In this little horn were eyes like those of a man, and a mouth speaking great things. Then follows the vision of the "Ancient of Days" and the destruction of this fourth beast. One like the Son of Man comes in the clouds to the Ancient of Days Who gives Him the Kingdom.

The Explanation:—These great beasts are four kings who for a time hold dominion, but the Kingdom will ultimately revert to the saints of the Most High who shall possess it forever. But "Daniel" desires to know especially concerning the fourth beast. While he is praying, Gabriel comes forth to show him the meaning of the vision. Without going into irrelevant details we may say that the underlying truth here is that Satan, represented in this instance by Rome, would for a time have things very much his own way; Messiah would be killed, Jerusalem destroyed, and God's people roughly treated; but Christ will come again, and desolation will be poured out upon Satan. "Daniel" had the consolation of knowing that although he lived in dark times, and although the struggle of righteous men seemed hopeless, yet he could die in peace with the assurance that the cause he represented would triumph in the end.

Material assistance is afforded by comparing Rev. xx: 1-3 with II Thess. ii. There Paul speaks of the "man of sin" who will be revealed after a "falling

away." The "mystery of lawlessness is already at work," and when the restraining power is removed will he appear. It is doubtful whether he means to describe an individual. The "man of sin" may be a collective idea. In Eph. ii: 15 he speaks of the "new man" composed of converted Jews and Gentiles, i. e., the Christian Church. It is possible that in the passage under consideration he has reference to the converse element in humanity. In the Christian dispensation, according to this, humanity comprises the "new man" and the "man of sin," the first being according to the working of God; the other "according to the working of Satan." (II Thess. ii: 9.)

It is to be noticed in the statements regarding the restraining power that the apostle Paul uses first the neuter, then the personal pronoun—"ye know WHAT restrains"; and "until HE who now restrains." May he not have reference here to the extraordinary manifestations of the Spirit so prevalent in the apostolic age? "Gifts of the spirit" were quite common then in almost every community. Perhaps the "thousand years" correspond to the period in the early Church when these "gifts" were so abundant. In that age the saints "lived and reigned," while "the rest of the dead (worshippers of the beast, the unspiritual) lived not until the thousand years should be finished," i. e., until their leader, Satan, was released from the abyss. So the restraining power of II Thess. ii (i. e., the gifts of the Spirit in the early Church), may correspond to the reign of the saints in Rev. xx. The "loosing" of Satan after the "thousand years'" incarceration, corresponds to Paul's statement that the miraculous gifts "will be done away." (I Cor. xiii: 8.) While these manifestations were apparent there was little likelihood of success in Satan's operations, and so he was, in the language of the seer, chained in the

abyss; but when these ceased a reaction and a great apostasy took place. It must be remembered that Paul wrote while the churches were yet endowed with this witnessing power. In other words, the "thousand years" were on when Paul wrote to the Thessalonians of the power that held in restraint "the man of sin." It seemed as if Satan was out of the way. The gospel was manifesting its power, its victories were manifold. But when these manifestations shall have been withdrawn, it will seem as if Satan were again loose, and gathers his armies ("the rest of the dead") to fight against the Lord, Who destroys him with the breath of His mouth. (II Thess. ii: 2-8; Rev. xx: 7-10.)

Testimony of John's Epistles:—The above explanation also harmonizes with John's first and second epistles. "Little children, it is the last hour; and as ye heard that Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; whence we know that it is the last hour." (I John ii: 18.) John was writing late in the first century, the extraordinary manifestations of Divine Power were being withdrawn, the anti-christian spirit was beginning to show itself in the denial of Christ's Deity. It is evident that the apostles believed in the withdrawal of this special Divine Power which would result in a REVIVAL of Satanic power, evidences of which were not wanting at the time John wrote his letters. Of course, it is to be borne in mind that this is only ideally, not literally, true. Satan was perhaps never busier than at the time designated, but the author's main idea is to emphasize the glorious victory of Christ and the triumph of the early Church in spreading the news of the Kingdom. This for the time being completely overshadowed Satan's operations. Numbers, like almost everything else in the Apocalypse, must be interpreted not literally but figuratively. A thousand may have suggested perfection

to the mind of the Seer. It is the cube of ten, ten times ten making a hundred, square surface measurement. To make this a cube multiply the hundred by ten and you have a thousand. Such definiteness in the number doubtless was intended to convey the idea of the COMPLETE subjugation of Satan, and the corresponding triumph of Christ and His Saints. There is no idea, we take it, of suggesting the length of time Satan is bound. Clear analysis is not always possible in the Revelation because of the author's method in presenting his ideas, but the lines are sufficiently distinct to enable us to approach to his meaning. Our explanation of this passage may not meet with universal acceptance, but we are satisfied that it comes nearer the truth than any theory that places the "millennium" in the future, near or distant; that interprets the number literally, with a resurrection at both ends, and that closes its eyes to the PRESENT reign of Christ; that insists on postponing this to the future and making it an earthly reign in a rebuilt Jerusalem.

Present Reign of Christ:—If anything is at all clear in the New Testament, it is that the Mediatorial reign of Christ is now on, and has been a reality ever since his ascension "to the right hand of God." To quote would mean the reiteration of most of the New Testament lying between the first chapter of the Acts and the last chapter of the Revelation. It will be pertinent, however, to point out to the student of the Apocalypse, the Seer's belief in the present fact. Christ is "the ruler of the kings of the earth." (i: 5.) As the "Lion of the tribe of Judah" and the "slain Lamb that loosed us from our sins," He even now receives the homage and worship of those who comprise His "kingdom." (i: 6; v: 8-14.) When the seventh Trumpet was sounded, "voices in heaven" said "The kingdom of the world is become our Lord's, and

His Christ's." (xi: 15 : xii: 10.) We believe we are right in placing this at the beginning, rather than at the end, of the present dispensation.

Differing Views:—Yet, in spite of this witness of the Scriptures, the Church, speaking generally, is divided into two main camps, the line of cleavage being the "millennium," popularly regarded as still future; the contention as to whether Christ will come BEFORE or AFTER the "thousand years" classifying them as pre-millennarians and post-millennarians. It is due to the latter to say that in their theory there is room for the doctrine of the present Mediatorial reign of Christ; while with the former, the view they hold of the plan of redemption and the present condition of the world precludes such a possibility.

We wish it understood, of course, that we have stated the GENERAL views of the two schools. Doubtless there are many exceptions. But the main thing we wish to emphasize here is our amazement that such a contention should be waged around so obscure a statement in a book generally acknowledged to be symbolic and figurative. Attempts have been made by some to twist other Scriptures into line with this, such as I Cor. xv: 23, 24; and Phil. iii: 11; but with indifferent success.

"First Resurrection":—To reign with Christ is the privilege of those who are described as having remained loyal in the prospect of great suffering; and, as in the case of their Lord, this blessed experience. "which is the first resurrection" (verse 5), does not await the future. It is even now an "earnest," a foretaste of what will be theirs everlastingly in the world to come. To this other Scriptures attest: The ordinance of Baptism (immersion) sets forth in its symbolism the burial into death and the rising in newness of life. (Rom. vi: 3-11.) The Power by means of

which this is accomplished is the Spirit. (Rom. viii: 11.) Even now such are the children of God, and because they are children, heirs, joint-heirs with Christ, glorified WITH Him, because of having suffered WITH Him. (Rom. viii: 16, 17; I John iii: 2.) The "first resurrection" is spiritual, and may be experienced in THIS life, whatever may be the nature of the resurrection AFTER DEATH, of which Paul speaks in I Cor. xv. Else what meaning is to be attached to such statements as, "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God." "For ye died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God?" (Col. iii: 1, 3.) And Paul's holy ambition as expressed in Phil. iii: 10-14? An unbiased interpretation of his words must apply them to Paul's desire for moral and spiritual attainment in the present life.

This is the heritage of all God's people everywhere. The "souls of those who had been beheaded" are not to be distinguished from the great host of God. In this Book all God's people are regarded as martyrs, and in the great conflict of which it treats, all must bear the cross before they can gain the crown. Herein men are viewed absolutely in their relations to the world to come. (vi: 9-11; vii: 9-17.) This is a sufficient answer to an objection that may be anticipated, namely, that this explanation is contradictory in that it makes the saints to reign permanently while the imprisonment of Satan is temporary, although in the text these are co-extensive. Surely it does not follow that the "loosing" of Satan interrupts the sovereignty of God's people. The "thousand years" is a term expressive of the inviolability of the saints as well as of the completeness of Satan's subsidence.

It is an assurance that the Lord's people and the Lord's work are safe, and has no reference to a lit-

eral "binding" and "loosing"; for as we have already stated, perhaps at no period of his existence was he more strenuous in his opposition, but this was only secondary in importance to the Christian victory. Great advances in the Kingdom of God such as that witnessed in the apostolic age, when vast numbers of people are affected, have often been followed by reaction and apostasy. In the instance under consideration the "falling away" of II Thess. ii: 3 was contemporaneous with the "loosing" of Satan. (Rev. xx: 3. Cf. II Thessalonians ii: 8.) But God's true people are they who "endure to the end." (Matt. xxiv: 13.) These are not affected by the revelation of "the lawless one."

The "Beheaded" and "the rest of the dead":— In distinguishing between the "souls of the beheaded" and "the rest of the dead" regard must be paid to the relations in which these classes are viewed. The former "live and reign with Christ," the latter "lived not until the thousand years should be finished." Between the fall of the sixth head of the "beast" and the rise of the seventh all is quiet, so to speak. The rise of the seventh head is equivalent to the loosing of Satan after the "thousand years." Then comes the final battle. Satan and "the rest of the dead" (spiritually dead) go against the camp of the saints, they who "live" and reign with Christ. In plain language, the Seer has reference to the spiritual and unspiritual, and as men are regarded from the view-point of eternity, the accident of death (physical) does not enter into the conception. Those who have part in "the first resurrection" include the righteous militant, as well as the righteous triumphant; while "the rest of the dead" include the unspiritual living as well as the impenitent dead. Thus we are taught the status of the only classes of humanity the Bible knows,—the right-

eous and the wicked. The righteous "live and reign." The wicked are "dead." The former have part in the "first resurrection," the latter experience the "second death, the lake of fire." The "second death" is not something that is remote, affecting men only beyond the grave. It involves the present state of the wilfully wicked on the earth, as well as those who have died in their guilt. A little amplification will make this clearer. The Scriptures speak of the unregenerate as "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. ii: 1), and of their need of the new birth. (John iii: 3.) Christ came to give "life." (John x: 10.) Speaking then along this line, humanity is naturally in the state of the first death. The "second death" is this state intensified. It is that moral condition at which men arrive who wilfully and persistently reject the proffered mercies of God. There is progress downwards as well as upwards, and when men become fixed in their evil habits they are dangerously near the "second death," and are likely to earn the epithet applied by Jude to false teachers—"trees twice dead." (Jude 12.) This interpretation of the "second death" obviates the necessity of a literal interpretation of "the lake of fire." This phrase occurs frequently in the closing chapters of the Revelation. It is an echo of what fell from the lips of Christ regarding the destiny of the finally impenitent. The "lake of fire" is that spoken of as a place "where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." (Mk. ix: 48; Isa. lxvi: 24.) "Depart from Me, accursed, into the eternal fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels." (Matt. xxv: 41.) It is the "Gehenna" of the Scriptures, the Valley of Hinnom, the place just outside Jerusalem where the offal of the city was cast to be burned. Day and night it flamed forth, thus offering a ready symbol of the per-

manent fate of the wicked. It is the thought of final rejection, and not the manner of punishment, that is set forth in all these references.

PART V.

Conclusion (xx:7; xxii:21).

CHAPTER XVII.

JUDGMENT OF SATAN AND THE DEAD.

Revelation xx:7-15.

And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall come forth to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up over the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were

opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire. And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.

We have reached the last grand division in the author's scheme. Like a diamond with several facets, the subject has been presented in its various phases until we have viewed it from all conceivable points. First, we have a rapid survey of the whole problem (vi-vii), then a more detailed treatment as the problem affected the "chosen people." (viii-xii.) Following this we have been shown the contemporary aspect. (xiii-xx: 6.) It has resulted in the destruction of the two beasts. The author now resumes the general features, showing how Satan, now without vicegerent or secondary agencies, is finally overcome, and how the victory over Evil ushers in the new heaven and the new earth.

"Loosed a little time":—It should not be difficult to see that the author is still dealing with conditions in the world as it is today. The "loosing" of Satan is his way of accounting for the prevalence of evil during the Christian dispensation in spite of the triumph of Christ and the share His followers, even during their earthly pilgrimage, have in it.

The names "Gog and Magog" appear in Ezek. xxxviii-xxxix, where, however, we read "Gog, the land of Magog." From Gen. x: 2 we learn that Magog was a son of Japheth, father of the Gentiles as dis-

tinguished from the race of Shem, Gog being "the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal" (Ezek. xxxviii: 2), who were also sons of Japheth. Josephus declared that the Scythians, the general name given by Herodotus to the northern races beyond the Caucasian range, were the descendants of Magog. (Antt. i: 63.) From B. C. 633 to B. C. 605 there were various Western expeditions undertaken by the Scythians, in one of which Judea was threatened with devastation. Although the historical books of the Old Testament are silent on this matter, there is clear evidence of it in Jer. iv and in Zeph., while the name Scythopolis, given to ancient Bethshean (Jud. i: 7) on the highway between Nineveh and Egypt perpetuated the memory of the event.

This terrible irruption, which left such traces and memories behind, supplied Ezekiel with a background for his vision of Gog and Magog, where his language implies that these names symbolized the enmity of the world to the people of God, having been the subjects of earlier prophecy. (Ezek. xxxviii: 17.)

All through the Revelation the Seer has been using past historical events to illustrate his meaning. Once more he borrows from Ezekiel, in greater detail, the imagery which served him in xix: 17, in order to set forth the destruction of Satan and his hosts in their last assault on the City of God. Consistently with the thought already expressed of Satan's manifestations of himself in the "dragon" and "beast," we must regard this "little time" as synonymous with the reign of the "seventh head" or "ten horns." Roughly speaking, this covers the whole of the Christian dispensation.

Care must be taken not to literalize here. We must sympathize with the writer's motive if we are to catch his meaning. This is descriptive language, and to

picture the truths he wished to teach, some such outline was necessary. But the facts are not literally as he has described them. This is hyperbole. How else could he have described the victory of Christ over Satan except to picture the latter as "wounded unto death" (xiii: 3) and entombed? Christ's enemies put Him to death and He was buried. But He arose from the grave. It was really Satan who was vanquished, and consistently with his tendency as a caricaturist the author in this word-picture lays him in a grave. But in order to account for Satan's activity throughout the Christian dispensation, it was necessary to picture him as being "loosed." Mark that he does not rise of his own accord and by any inherent power. He is "loosed," a term which implies permissive freedom. This lasts only "a little time." This phrase is analogous to the other indefinite expressions of time we have encountered in our studies.

The whole Book of Revelation is concerned with things "shortly to come to pass." (i: 1.) The souls under the altar (vi: 2) were to wait "a little time," i. e., to the end of the dispensation. Again in xii: 12 we read "the devil is gone down, knowing that he hath but a little season." In its farthest reach this must include the whole period of his activity in the world. From many passages in the Book it is clear that the whole Christian dispensation is looked upon as a very little time, "as hastening to its final issue, and as about to be closed by One Who cometh quickly." As already stated, it is the time between the first and second comings of Christ.

Judgment of Satan:—In Chapter XVII it is predicted that this renewed activity, so to speak, takes the shape of "war with the Lamb," and also the persecution of the "harlot" or Judaism. "These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will over-

come them; because he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and they who are with him are called, and elect, and faithful." (xvii: 14.)

"And the ten horns which thou sawest and the beast, these will hate the harlot, and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh, and burn her up with fire." (xvii: 16.) We hesitate to dogmatize where one can so easily be mistaken, but it would seem that these "ten horns" symbolize the anti-christianism and anti-semitism of the Christian era. The "Lamb," indeed, "will overcome them," but the "harlot" has already been made "desolate and naked." There is no contradiction here. The two lines of thought are complementary. The anti-christian and the anti-semitic spirit both find their inspiration in Satan. Though the anti-semitic spirit has been found largely among Christian nations, so called, it is none the less Satanic. In this present section (xx: 7-10) the prediction of the persecution of the Lamb and the saints is depicted as being fulfilled. All this is but an echo of the perils confronting the Church which Christ and Paul warned against. (Matt. xxiv: passim; II Tim. iii: 1.) The result will be complete victory for the saints. Their enemies will be annihilated, "and the Devil who led them astray" will be cast "into the lake of fire" to keep company with "the beast and false prophet," from which neither will again be "loosed." This is the final effort of Satan against the saints and the issue of the struggle. The seer has reached the grand climax of that part of his theme which deals with the *DRAMATIS PERSONAE* of evil.

Judgment of the "Dead":—The third main feature need detain us very little. John has a vision of "a great white throne, and of Him Who sat on it" before Whom "the dead, the great and the small"

stand. "And books were opened; and another book was opened, which is (the book) of life." They are "judged out of the things that were written in the books." The "sea" and "death" and "Hades" gave up their dead, who were judged according to their works.

"Death" and "Hades" and "any one not found written in the book of life were cast into the lake of fire," which is the "second death."

This is not what is popularly spoken of as the "general Judgment." In John's teaching the Judgment is never referred to as something ultimate, but as a continuous process. Men are ever arraying themselves on the one side or the other. The Judgment is constantly going on. In the passage before us we are introduced to the "DEAD, great and small." The faithful "LIVE and reign," and we take it that THEY have no part in this transaction. There IS a "general Judgment" in which the Judge when He comes will dispense rewards and punishments (xxii: 12), but the seer does not here refer to this. This is rather a side view of the fate of those who are opposed to Righteousness.

The "books" must be distinguished from "the book of life." The former contain the "deeds" of the "dead," i. e., evil deeds alone. The "book of life" contains the names of the righteous. The latter is opened not to secure deliverance to those whose names are inscribed therein, but only to prove the justness of the sentence imposed on those who may be cast into the "lake of fire." If their names are not written in the "book of life" this is the fate that awaits them.

The correctness of this conclusion is further assured by calling to mind the judgment referred to under the seventh Trumpet. (xi: 18.) In the present vision this is enlarged upon. The persons spoken of as "the dead" are obviously the same in both visions,

and in the earlier vision these are clearly distinguished from those called "Thy servants the prophets," the time of whose "reward" had come.

The meaning of "sea" and "death" and "Hades" also confirms the position taken here. The "sea" is not the literal ocean. Throughout this Book it is used in a figurative sense, descriptive of troubled and unruly nations. When in the vision of the new heaven and earth it is said "the sea is no more" we are not to understand that one of the great glories of creation is missing, but that under the new conditions of life there will be no more strife and turmoil. "The sea is no more" because Satan is no more, and because the beast (xiii: 1) that came out of the sea is no more to which the dragon delegated his authority. In short, the troubled and unruly nations, suggestive of the sea, which did Satan's bidding are, according to the Seer's conception, "no more." (See Chapter XV.) So, too, with "death." This is not the "neutral grave," for it is cast into the lake of fire. Likewise of "Hades," which in vi: 8 is the inseparable companion of "death." In the New Testament, Hades "always appears as a region of gloom, and punishment, and opposition to the truth." For example, "And thou, Capernaum, shalt thou be exalted to heaven? Thou shalt go down to Hades." (Matt. xi: 23.) "And I also say to thee, that thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." (Matt. xvi: 18.) So it is the ungodly dead which the "sea, and death, and Hades" give up to judgment, while in John's general teaching the eternal condition of the righteous is secured for them even here and now in the work of their glorified Head.

CHAPTER XVIII.

NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH.

Revelation xxi-xxii.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God: and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away. And he that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he saith, Write: for these words are faithful and true. And he said unto me, They are come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.

And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were laden with the

seven last plagues; and he spake with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and shewed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: her light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal: having a wall great and high; having twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east were three gates; and on the north three gates; and on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that spake with me had for a measure a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length thereof is as great as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs: the length and the breadth and the height thereof are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, a hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. And the building of the wall thereof was jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto pure glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. And

the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the several gates was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof. And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb. And the nations shall walk amidst the light thereof: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory into it. And the gates thereof shall in no wise be shut by day (for there shall be no night there): and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it: and there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie: but only they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

And he shewed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the midst of the street thereof. And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruits, yielding its fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no curse any more: and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein: and his servants shall do him service; and they shall see his face; and his name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall be night no more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God shall give them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

And he saith unto me, These words are faithful and true: and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to shew unto his

servants the things which must shortly come to pass. And behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book.

And I John am he that heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren the prophets, and with them which keep the words of this book: worship God.

And he saith unto me, Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand. He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still. Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man, according as his work is. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to come to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city. Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie.

I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star.

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is

athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely.

I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book.

He which testifieth these things saith, Yea: I come quickly. Amen: come, Lord Jesus.

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints. Amen.

Paradise Restored:—Here the seer is shown a new world. A "new heaven and a new earth" displace the "first heaven and the first earth." Descending from heaven is "the holy city, new Jerusalem, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Two words in the New Testament are translated "new," but there is a difference between them. The one refers to an object recently brought into existence, the other to the appearance in another aspect of what had previously existed. The latter word is employed here. What is the meaning of this vision? Before we attempt to answer this question, it may be necessary once more to call attention to the absence of chronological sequence in the Revelation. Our answer must by no means be prejudiced by the close of Chapter XX.

Let us notice that the new Jerusalem, though described as a city, is a figure, not of a place, but a people. It is "the bride, the wife of the Lamb." This statement requires no amplification to prove that it is the Church of Christ that is here referred to. Whatever is said of the new city in this description is said of the true followers of Jesus. Is this description

applicable to the Church only in its glorified state, or is it also suited to its present condition? It has always been regarded as a picture of the Church triumphant, the Church after the Judgment, in her state of glorification when all her enemies are destroyed. But the seer's habit of idealizing everything should be considered here. In this scene of the new Jerusalem we have once more before us the descriptions given in Isa. lx, and in Ezek. xl-xlviii. The order followed here is that of Ezekiel, who, after his account of Gog and Magog, exhibits in vision the Holy City and Temple, and the return to it of God's glory. This portion of the Old Testament is a pictorial representation of what the Hebrew prophets had predicted of the times of the Messiah on earth. That God would establish a kingdom of righteousness is the promise of the Old Testament. That Christ planted that kingdom with the beginning, and not with the end, of the Christian dispensation is the conviction of the New. First John the Baptist and then Christ came preaching "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." This was the burden of the Master's preaching throughout His ministry. "To accept His gospel is to receive the kingdom of God. Almost without exception, His parables set forth some aspect of the kingdom—its nature, its condition of growth, the attitude of men toward it, its requirements, rewards, and its retributions."

Present Felicity:—Strikingly beautiful and tender as is the seer's description of the new Jerusalem, it is not primarily a picture of Heaven, the eternal home of the redeemed, although in his vision the seer has caught glimpses of Heaven and breathed its atmosphere. It is rather a picture of earth under the regime of the gospel, in the terms of Heaven. We have been wrong in transferring this picture wholly to the future. Throughout the Book actual conditions,

as regards God's people, are idealized as a prophecy of future reality. It is characteristic of John's writings to picture the Christian life as a present felicity. The believer's possessions are always spoken of in the present tense. In this as in all else, the author is in perfect harmony with the rest of the New Testament. Notwithstanding all their imperfections the Churches to which the various epistles are addressed, are referred to as "beloved of God," "sanctified in Christ Jesus," "saints and faithful brethren in Christ." (Rom. i: 7; I Cor. i: 2; Col. i: 2.) Christ is "in them" and they are "in Christ." "Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself up for it; * * * that He might Himself present to Himself the Church, glorious, not having a spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it may be holy and without blemish." (Eph. v: 25, 27.) This description evidently applies to the present world. Our "citizenship" is declared to be "in heaven" (Phil. iii: 20), the Church is seated, not in earthly, but "in the heavenly" places (Eph. ii: 6); we are even now "come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to innumerable hosts of angels, and to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, who are enrolled in heaven." (Heb. xii: 22, 23.) Our Lord Jesus is even more specific as to His people's present glory. "In that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." (John xiv: 29.) Again, "And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as We are one." (John xvii: 22.)

Certain Victory:—In the study of the Revelation then, these two parallel lines of truth must constantly be kept in mind—the actual and the ideal. The latter is most prominent as giving an optimistic tone to the whole message of the Book, assuring God's people of certain victory. The prayer, "Thy kingdom come" is

pictured as already fully answered. The "first things have passed away." In this perfect Kingdom of God which the New Testament testifies as even now established among men, the ideal aspect for the Christian is that he beholds sin a conquered enemy, temptation overcome, death so deprived of its sting that it is no more death; even though we may for a little be put to grief in manifold temptations. Apart from a greater variety of detail, the representation of the New Jerusalem in the Apocalypse differs in no essential respect from the above. There is nothing here that is not found, in principle at least, in the other sacred writers, and which is connected by them with the heavenly aspect of the Christian's pilgrimage to his eternal home.

That anything further relating to earth should be described after the vision of the final judgment of the wicked in the last chapter, may seem strange. Here, however, we have another instance of the author's method of developing the various phases of his subject to the end, without regard to chronology or related themes. We have seen that the plan of the Book is to unfold its teaching in cycles. When an idea is introduced it is carried on to its issue. (See vi-vii; viii-xii; xiii-xviii.) This is likewise true concerning the fate of the *DRAMATIS PERSONAE* of Evil, which must carry us to the end of all time. (xx: 10.) From this point he returns to continue his main thesis.

That the seer, however, is still speaking of this world as we know it, and that we have made no mistake in thus interpreting him, is evident from the following indications: In xx: 9 we read of "the camp of the saints and the beloved city." The city is none other than the New Jerusalem about to be described in the following chapter. This description has been

anticipated by the call of xviii: 4, "Come forth, My people, out of her." She is inhabited now by none but saints, though yet in the world, and as the object of attack by Satan and his hosts before the Judgment.

In xxi: 24 we read, "And the nations shall walk by the light thereof; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory into it." And in xxii: 2, "And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." Bearing in mind that the City describes the people of God rather than their residence, the "kings" and the "nations" must be differentiated from them.

These references together with xxi: 7, "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that doeth an abomination and a lie," distinctly indicate that the time for final separation had not yet come.

We cannot fully appreciate what this vision of the Holy City meant to John. It called him to look up from his then condition to what was worthy of his admiration, his love and his sacrifice. The era in which this vision was granted has been called the era of the "city state." One city, Rome, had dominated and brought into subjection all the cities bordering on the Mediterranean. Alexandria, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, paid tribute to her; and, as we have just seen by anticipation (assuming that the Revelation was written just prior to A. D. 70), she will have made of Jerusalem a pile of ruins. The world of that day groaned and submitted. John himself was a victim of her tyranny. (i: 9.) Then came this vision. There was to be a new City, before which even Rome would fade away.

Passing of Judaism:—But predominant as was Rome, if there is any significance in the seer's treatment of his theme respecting Judaism and Jerusalem, then the emphasis is to be placed not on the passing

of Rome, but upon the elimination of Judaism as a potent factor in the future history of the world. The coming city is new *Jerusalem*. We venture to say that the phase of persecution which stirred the seer most was not the pagan, but the religious. Heathenism the Church confidently expected to combat with weapons mighty through God for the pulling down of its strongholds. It boldly invaded its territory and got a fair field. But the struggle with Judaism was more subtle. In a measure, its opposition came with surprise. The apostles themselves had once been as zealous for Judaism as were those now opposing them. They, therefore, had a right to expect their misled former co-religionists to ultimately come into the light. But the experience of the early Church soon dissipated that hope. The Jews had religious zeal without knowledge, and the result of their opposition to the new order of things was the passing of Jerusalem, and with it Judaism, as a calculable force.

New Jerusalem:—Perhaps it is not difficult now to see that in the description of the new City we have an ideal picture of religious conditions during the gospel era. Here is a new Jerusalem in a new world. The old Jerusalem is no more. New conditions of life in general will obtain here. This is a world without a "sea." We have already pointed out the figurative sense in which "sea" is used in this Book. There will be no more turmoil and strife of nations. The "golden age" of the prophets will be realized under Messiah's sway. It is to be a time of peace, when the nations will have beaten their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks. (Isa. ii: 4; Mic. iv: 3.) The Kingdom of God can then peacefully extend its sway and absorb the kingdoms of the world.

It was a far cry, of course, between the actual condition of the world and the world as John saw it in

vision. But what encouragement for the waiting Church. How cheerfully ought she to labor and pray to the end that these things be actually realized. From Christ's day to this the Kingdom of God has been coming, the City of God has been descending from heaven. The vision has not always been clear. When, however, it has been lost sight of, it is because men have forgotten the conditions of spiritual discernment. All seers of the divine have been, like John, "in the Spirit."

The prayers for God and His Kingdom must and will be answered. Much that is strange and terrible in our earthly life will yet be unriddled in the light of the meaning of these prayers. At present God is, in a sense, shut out from His world by the selfishness of men. His absence is the cause of all the world's sin and misery. At His coming every evil that stalks the earth would perish. Therefore, every noble impulse which moves the hearts of good men toward their fellows should have this as its aim—to get God again into His world, and to secure that "His Will be done in earth as it is in heaven." Christ taught His disciples to pray, "Thy Kingdom come," and today that Kingdom is more than an ideal; it is in large part a reality. It is impossible to conceive of it as existing apart from human life. It is in life and concerns man in every phase of his being. The gospel is good news for the world that now is, and a revelation of the world to come.

The whole picture given in these two chapters must be regarded as symbolical, the dimensions surpassing any natural explanation. In it there is plainly a reference to the ancient Babylon, the name which the seer applied to Jerusalem. Herodotus, who had himself seen the grandeur of Babylon, describes it as four-square, that each side was 120 stadii in length (i.e.,

one hundredth part of the length of each side of the "New Jerusalem"), that its walls were 200 cubits in height, and 50 cubits in thickness, and that it had 100 gates of brass. Ancient Babylon contained within its walls that vast Temple of Belus, which was also four-square, each side of its sacred precincts being two stadii in length. The Belus tower was built in stages, eight in number, square being placed on square. Through the city flowed the Euphrates, dividing it nearly in half. Here, too, were the "hanging gardens" in the form of terraces, the highest of which was planted with trees of all kinds, some of the largest size. (See Rawlinson's *Ancient Monarchies*, ii: 510-540.)

If read in connection with the first three chapters of Genesis, it also becomes plain that the author meant to recall the Old Testament story of Eden to mind. "The new heaven and the new earth take the place of the old. The city of God, or the paradise of God (ii: 7), takes the place of the Garden of Eden. The river of water of life corresponds to the fourfold river of Eden. The tree of life reappears in the midst of the city. And, to clinch the parallel, we are told that in the city of God there shall be no more curse; the ransom from the primal curse of Eden is complete."

Consistently with the method pursued throughout the Apocalypse, the new City also has gates, named after the twelve Tribes; and walls, named after the twelve Apostles, thus combining the Church of both dispensations. Indeed, the New Jerusalem is spoken of as the Bride of the Lamb, i. e., the Church. The figure of marriage is used many times in both the Old and New Testaments, to illustrate the relationship between God and His people.

In Chapter XI the seer is told to measure the Temple, but not the court of the Gentiles. That was before Judaism as an organic force is represented as having passed away. But in the New Jerusalem there is no Temple. The angel measures the City. The Temple was an emblem of God's Presence. It is no more, the symbol having given place to the reality, the shadow to the substance. God is the Temple here. No doubt John has in mind God's peculiar habitation in the Church, which is "the light of the world" (Matt. v: 14), whose gates are ever open to those whose names are "written in the Lamb's Book of Life." For here in "Paradise Restored" there are no cherubim to keep the way of life as in "Paradise Lost." On the contrary, the inhabitants of the new City have free access to the "tree of life" and the "water of life."

Concluding Remarks:—In the midst of these wonders the seer falls down in adoration of the "angel" who showed him these things. This is the second time he has been impelled to this act of devotion, the first time being when he is told "the marriage of the Lamb is come." (xix: 10.) On both occasions the "angel" causes him to desist, saying, "See thou do it not. I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book; worship God." This "angel" must be of a higher order than the others mentioned throughout the course of the narrative. All through his visions the seer has had to do with angels, but it is only this particular one he singles out for worship. For explanation we must recall John's foreword to his Revelation. "And he (Christ) sent and signified it through his angel to his servant John." The relation of this "angel" to Christ has already been dwelt upon, and needs no further comment here. But a statement made in the early part of this work may

be repeated here with profit. The "angel" and the thing which it predicates are identical, with this distinguishing mark, that "the angel is interposed when the Persons or things spoken of are represented as coming out of themselves and as taking their part in intercourse or action." (See Chapter IX.)

The "angel's" protest against the seer's homage is no objection to this explanation. It is simply in keeping with Jesus' attitude toward His disciples. "I am among you as he that serveth." (Luke xxii: 7.) "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister." (Matt. xx: 28.) This interpretation in no way invalidates what we have elsewhere said about the Deity of Christ, or that we imply that Christ is not to be worshipped. This is farthest from our thoughts, for if there is one thing we have emphasized in this study, it is the conspicuous place that Christ holds in all the visions of the Book of Revelation. He is ever the object of adoration with the redeemed because He purchased them with His blood, and because He is the Supreme Revealer of God. One of the plainest inferences of the whole Apocalypse is that God cannot be apprehended except through the Son. Our explanation of this incident harmonizes with the philosophy of the Biblical revelation. The need of revelation implies limitation on the part of those to whom it is made. It were unnecessary could we at present spiritually see eye to eye and face to face. But even now, with the revelation we have, "we see through a mirror obscurely," and we "know in part." "But when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part will be done away." (I Cor. xiii.) Like much else in the Apocalypse, the teaching here anticipates the time when revelation, i. e., divine accommodation to finite needs and limitations, will no longer be needed, but the imperfect, having through Divine grace be-

come perfect, even the revelation in the Son will have fulfilled its purpose, and God, the Absolute God, will be all in all. (I Cor. xv: 28.) It also teaches that angels, prophets, apostles and all saints are one in respect of service to God. It is an emphatic touch to the truth that has been presented several times throughout the Book, concerning the unity of the Church in all generations.

"The time is at hand," and the status of all classes is fixed. They must remain as they are, so to speak, and await the issue. This is capable of broad application. It is true every moment; death may ensue without warning and substantiate the truth of these words, or Christ may come in Person and fulfil them. This coming is, in its ultimate reach, the burden of John's message. What men are at this very moment determines their status from the Divine viewpoint, and as they have no lease on life their present *may* be their eternal state. John's opening statement is verified by Jesus, Who declares He sent His Angel to testify of these things. The Book closes with an universal invitation to the thirsty to "come, take the water of life freely." At the same time we have an echo of the cry of the suffering Church, "Come, Lord Jesus"! It is the cry of the Church universal and is as applicable to our day as that in which the words were written.

This is the Book of Revelation's answer to the age-long problem of the suffering of the righteous. All suffering, in its ultimate reach, is caused by sin. To bring peace and happiness sin must be eradicated. This can be done only through sacrificial suffering. "The lamb slain from before the foundation of the world" is God's remedy for sin, the antidote for the bane. The purposes of God are to be wrought through the atoning death of Christ. This "lamb" is also the

"Lion of the tribe of Judah," Who prevailed to open the book with the seven seals and Who solves the enigmas of history. The seer shows us how all things are working together for good because the triumphant Christ is present in His Church. The situation is admirably summed up by the apostle Paul thus: "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for the sake of his body, which is the Church." (Col. i-24.) In the Revelation this is the experience of all God's children. The Book teaches that all things are moving toward that felicitous time when the will of God shall be done in earth as in heaven and that the suffering of the righteous is a part of the Divine plan to that end. With the coming of the Kingdom in its completeness will appear the King.

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